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A  
DEMONSTRATION  
OF THE  
*Truth and Divinity*  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.  
IN  
Several DISCOURSES.



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DEMONSTRATION  
OF THE  
*Truth and Divinity*  
OF THE  
Christian Religion,

As it is propos'd to us in the SCRIPTURES  
of the NEW TESTAMENT.

IN  
Several DISCOURSES.

To which is annex'd

A DISCOURSE in general,  
To prove that Matters of FAITH are  
at least equally, if not more Demonstra-  
ble, in the strictest Sense of that WORD,  
than those of REASON.

By ROBERT GREEN, A. M. and  
Fellow of CLARE HALL.

CAMBRIDGE:

Printed at the UNIVERSITY-PRESS, for Edmund  
Jeffery, and Robert Chapman, Booksellers in  
Cambridge. MDCCXI.

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To the WORSHIPFULL

S<sup>r</sup> JOHN S<sup>t</sup> BARB,

Of Broadlands in Hampshire, Baronet,

*My most Honoured* PATRON.

SIR,

I NEED not enlarge upon  
the Excellency of Your  
Character, since it is so  
well known in the Place  
where You live; and where  
it is not known, I might pos-  
sibly lye under the Imputa-  
tion (tho' I shou'd say no-  
thing but truth) of making  
only a Panegyrick: You will  
therefore, I am certain, ex-  
cuse me on this Head, and  
think that the best Descrip-  
tion of a Patron's Worth and  
Merit,

Merit, is to be had from the Nature of the Book address'd to Him. This is concerning the Truth and Divinity of our most Holy Religion, and is a Confession to the World, whilst You permit this Address, notwithstanding the meaness of the Author, that You have entertain'd a most affectionate Esteem and Veneration for it, which is the brightest Ornament, and the truest Reputation that can either belong to a Gentleman, a good Man, or a sincere Christian.

*I am, with all Duty and Respect,*

S I R,

*Your most Oblig'd*

*and Humble Servant*

ROBERT GREEN.

# THE PREFACE.

§. 1. **A**FTER the commendable Performances of the Judicious Bishop of Exeter, upon the Subject we have at present undertaken, and the Elaborate Treatise of Grotius, concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion, it may perhaps seem to be a Presumption to attempt any thing which shall look like entering into the same Argument, which they may possibly be suppos'd to have exhausted: But as we pay all the Deference to those Great Men that can be imagin'd, so we must likewise insist upon the same Privilege which they took, of considering things in that Way and Method, which appear'd to them to be most agreeable, to produce a rational Conviction of the Truth they propos'd to prove.

§. 2. The Learned Bishop abovementioned has indeed taken abundance of pains to shew the Necessity of a standing Revela-



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tion, and in other Points has argu'd with a great deal of Clearness and Force; but I must humbly beg Leave to say, that as to what respects the Proof and Evidence of an Actual Revelation to Mankind, as to what concerns a Demonstration of the Truth and Divinity of the Holy Scriptures, his Arguments are laid too general, and are not so convincing, as if they had been drawn out into the particular Proofs we have of the Internal and External Evidence, both Humane and Divine, of these Sacred Writings, which we have endeavour'd to do.

§. 3. If this Reverend Prelate has not insisted upon the exactest way of Demonstrating we cou'd desire, and which cou'd not be expected in those narrow limits that were prescrib'd to his Admirable Discourses: The other Eminent Person we have nam'd, has still less; since we lay it down for a certain Maxim, That Christianity is not so justly and directly prov'd any other way, nor can be, as by an immediate Vindication of those Holy Oracles;

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*Oracles, by which it is transmitted to us.*

§. 4. For, besides the Evidence we have from Testimony for the Scriptures, and the Christian Religion, there are only two others pretended to: First, The Reasonableness of the Doctrines it proposes; Secondly, Their Preference to those of any other Religion.

§. 5. First, As to the Doctrines of Christianity, and that Fundamental one of the Existence of a GOD, His being a Spirit and Immaterial, His being Immortal, all powerful, infinitely wise, and just, and good, according to the sense which Christians have of Him, it will be very hard, if not impossible, to prove these and the other Attributes, which accrue to Him from the Scriptures, by Natural Arguments, and manifest and plain deductions of Reason, which may not be liable to a Contradiction; all the Moral Duties and Relations likewise which we owe to each other, from what Religion inculcates to us, will be still more difficult to evince.

§. 6.

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§. 6. For it is not, as is commonly practis'd by these Rationalists, it is not sufficient to the ascertaining of the Christian Religion, to give us a general account of the Being of a GOD, and some of His more demonstrable and apparent Attributes, as His Immensity, His Omnipotence, or His Infinite Wisdom, &c. nor yet is it enough for the obtaining that end, to explain to us the Reasonableness of certain Duties, which are common to Heathenism with Christianity it self, since unless we can deduce from Reason that Individual Almighty Being, with all His several Attributes and Perfections, which are represented to us in Scripture, as that unspeakable Love which He express'd to us in our Redemption; and unless we can also from the same Reason deduce those very Duties in their full latitude, as the preferring others to our selves, and the doing good for the evil we receive, which Christianity prescribes; such an Argument for the Truth of the Christian Religion can be of no force or significance; because if by Reason we collect one kind of an Almighty Being,  
and



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and one sort of Moral Duties, and by Revelation are furnish'd with another; what we infer or conclude from Reason, will not be a confirmation of, as it will have no connection with that which we own to proceed from Revelation.

§. 7. But farther, if we shou'd grant that Reason cou'd demonstrate the several Doctrines of Christianity, it wou'd not from thence follow, that the Christian Religion was either true, or of a divine Original, it cou'd only prove it to be a Rational System; whereas the evidencing what is a Rational System of Religion, is not a Demonstration that such a System is Divine, or that in Fact it is the Christian: that is, to argue from the Reasonableness of a Doctrine, to the Certainty of its being a Christian one, is not a just way of concluding, unless Christianity and Reason are reciprocal Terms, and whatsoever is Reasonable is Christian, and whatsoever is Christian is Reasonable; which at least cannot be known till we are certain what Christianity in Fact is; and consequently to argue

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from

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from the Rationalness of its Doctrines is upon the very supposition that the Truth of it is already prov'd.

§. 8. If yet Reason cou'd deduce all the Doctrines of Christianity from its own Principles, it wou'd altogether be incapable of solving the Mysteries of it, which therefore some have been so bold to deny, because, I suppose, they found it impossible to be reconcil'd with such kind of Demonstrations; which Demonstrations yet we have evidenc'd to be none at all.

§. 9. Secondly, As to the preference of the Doctrines of Christianity to those of any other Religion, whether Mahometan, or Pagan, or the Jewish, that may be a reason why we shou'd embrace one Religion rather than the other, if they stood upon an equal Evidence of being only Human Institutions: But it is no Argument in Matter of Fact, which of these Religions is true, and which of them had the fullest and clearest Attestations to their Divinity.

§. 10. If it be said, The Reasonableness of a Doctrine is one Attestation, we must  
then

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then inquire, and do desire to be inform'd, what is meant by Reason; if by that is intended what we can collect by the Force and Power of our own Faculties, we say, that we cannot from thence infer the several Mysteries reveal'd to us in Scripture, and consequently those Mysteries either have no Attestation from Reason, and yet are Divine, and must be prov'd another way to be so, than from Reason, or else there are no Mysteries at all: If there be no Mysteries, that must be prov'd from Reason or the Scriptures, but that there are no Mysteries cannot be prov'd from Reason, because they are in the former Argument suppos'd not to come under its cognisance; if from the Scriptures, and it is Matter of Fact that there are none, then those Scriptures are to be evidenc'd not from Reason, but from Attestation, so that which way soever we consider Christianity, it is plain the sole proof of it must at length be resolv'd into the Validity of the Testimonies produc'd for it.

§. 11. In fine, it seems to be very absurd and unreasonable, where the Question is concerning



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*cerning the truth of Matter of Fact, to have recourse to the Reason of that, the Fact of which is only inquir'd, and to prefer our Speculations about it, which may prove in all probability to be wrong, before a just Examination into the Evidence concerning it, in which it will not be so likely for us to be deceiv'd: thus for instance, if any one shou'd tell us, that there was a certain wonderful piece of Mechanism in the Indies, which we never heard of before, contriv'd and adjust'd in that manner, as to exhibit to us all the Motions of the Spheres, the rise and setting of the Stars, and the Revolutions of the Planets, according to their several periodick Times; another shou'd come and tell us the same thing, a third, a fourth, and a hundred or a thousand shou'd agree in the same story; I ask which wou'd be the most rational for us to do, to compare and compute the several Testimonies we have to convince us of this matter, or to go wisely about to prove from Reason and Speculation, how such a piece of Clock-work might be Mechanically contriv'd; shou'd we not rather  
be*

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*be first sure that this was not an Imposition upon us? And if it was certain Matter of Fact, shou'd we not rather conform our Reason and Sense to it, than make it submit to, and change in obedience to our Fancies and Opinions?*

§. 12. *The case is the same in Christianity; it was a wonderful contrivance in Almighty God, for the Salvation and Redemption of Mankind, and it is confirm'd to us by an abundant Testimony, transmitted down to us from the first time of its being promulg'd to the World; and if in this present Age any one doubted of it, which wou'd be the most rational way for him to be convinc'd? certainly (for the Instance is exactly parallel) not by reasoning upon this Miraculous Dispensation of Almighty God, but by examining whether he has sufficient Evidence to believe there ever was such a Dispensation; and if there was, to make his Reason be rather obedient to his Faith, than subject his Faith to his Reason.*

§. 13. *We have spoke more largely to this, that we may shew upon what different*  
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*Principles the Truths of Religion, and those of Reason are founded; which yet in the present Age have been so little distinguish'd, that Christianity, for some time, has scarcely been thought to have been supported by any other Patronage than that of the kind Offices Reason has been pleas'd to do it; whereas it stands firm upon its own Evidence, and do's not need to depend upon the pleasure and caprice of so fickle and inconstant an Advocate.*

§. 14. *After what we have said, it is scarcely worth while to take notice of that common piece of Sophistry, which is so much espous'd by the Rationalists of the Age, that Revelation cou'd not be demonstrated otherwise than by Reason; since it is easy to know what we mean by that word, and which is more fully explain'd in Discourse the Tenth of this Book; that is, what the World now generally means by Rational, is, the deducing of one Proposition from another in Matters of Science and Speculation, and the whole Province is committed to the Mind of forming and abstracting its*  
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Notions at pleasure, and discoursing upon them; and where the Understanding is thus employ'd, we cannot but think it is more capable of being deceiv'd, by the plain Instances we shall give in Mathematicks and Philosophy, than when it only considers Matters of Fact, and the Testimony we have for 'em; which tho' it may be call'd Reason, yet is widely different from what is meant and intended by the former.

§. 15. We shall add, that what we now propose to the World is with a sincere and affectionate Design of vindicating Religion, against the Atheism of the Age; and if we have been guilty of any incidental Errors, in the following Discourses, we shall desire to be inform'd of them; which upon the first conviction, we here profess our selves ready and willing to retract. And here we cannot but take notice of the Eminent and Learned Dr. Jenkin, and Dr. Gastrel, who have gone much farther upon this Subject, than perhaps any Persons before them; whose Labours as we very much value and esteem, so we shou'd find an extreme Satisfaction from our own,

if

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*if this short Vindication of our most Blessed Religion might meet with their and all other good Men's Approbation; especially seeing what we have produc'd in this Argument, is not design'd to supersede, or to evacuate what is writ by other Pens, but to add a fresh Weight and Moment to the Evidence already alledg'd, in the Defence of so Great and so Divine a Truth, as that of our Common Christianity.*

*I shall only farther in this Section desire my Reader's Leave, to subjoyn, to the end these Papers may not suffer by the meanness and unworthiness of the Author, that they have been communicated to some of my Friends, who are capable of judging, and who in the main encouraged the Publication of them.*

*§. 16. To conclude, If what is here offer'd can be of any Service to the World, or can do the least good either in confirming Men in their most Holy Faith, or reducing them to it: I earnestly request in the first place, my Reader will pay his pious Acknowledgments to the Memory of the most*  
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Excellent Mr. Robert Green, formerly Mercer in Tamworth, my Dearest and most Honoured Father, to whose Affectionate and Religious Education and Instructions, which I receiv'd from Him, in the Principles of our Divine Christianity, next to GOD's Blessing and Assistance, these Discourses are chiefly owing; a Person, who for his exemplary and singular Piety towards GOD, his stedfast and unshaken Expectations of the Happiness of another World, thro' the Merits and Mediation of our Lord, and his humble and charitable Behaviour and Deportment towards all; who for his Sobriety, Temperance and Meekness, and all the Ornaments of a truly Holy and Christian Life, as by what instances we have seen of the best Men in the present Age, he seems not to be imitated, by those who shall succeed him, so we cannot but think he was not to be parallel'd by any that went before him, since the times of the Apostles, and the very first Foundation of our Religion it self; nor, however extraordinary, is this a Character too great with those few who knew him;



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him; and whose Name therefore ought to be entitled to a just Mention in these Papers; in which if there is any thing good or truly valuable, I may in a Literal sense almost say, He being dead, yet speaketh.

I cannot but likewise here remember, with the greatest Testimony of Respect and Duty, the Reverend Mr. John Pretty, Rector of Farley near Winchester, my most Honoured Patron and Uncle; by whose Generosity and Kindness, upon the Death of my Father, I have formerly been assisted in my Maintenance in this University; and altho' he desires out of his abundant Piety and Goodness, to be conceal'd from the Publick, my extraordinary and excessive Obligations to him, will not suffer me to pass over in silence a Name so dear to me.

These are they, to whom, if to any one my Reader is oblig'd; and therefore he will pardon me when I desire his affectionate Remembrance of them, if the least Benefit or Advantage shou'd accrue to him from a Perusal of what is here writ, having no Demands as to what concerns my self, unless those of his Ingenuity and Candour.

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A  
**DEMONSTRATION**  
OF THE  
*Truth and Divinity*  
OF THE  
**CHRISTIAN RELIGION.**

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2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

16. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.*

17. *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works.*

DISCOURSE I.

§. I. **H**AVING a design in these Religious Exercises, which the Authority of our Pious Founders has prescrib'd, to treat of the *Holy Scriptures*, and to go as far as we can in a Plain and Natural Interpretation of them, it seem'd very reasonable in the first place to speak of them at large, and to consider

A

both.

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both the Authority, and the Nature and Intention of 'em: upon which account we have made choice of the Words of the Blessed Apostle St. Paul, *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God*; under which Head we shall examine into

*First*, The Authority of these Sacred Writings, both in respect of their Truth and Divinity.

*2ly*, The same Apostle tells us, That *they are profitable for Doctrine, for Re-proof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness*; where we shall endeavour to shew the excellent Nature of the Doctrines and Precepts contain'd in 'em. And

*Lastly*, Explain the Design and meaning of 'em; *namely*, To make us better, and more holy, to carry us on from a Knowledge to a Performance of our Duty, *That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works*. And

*First*, As to the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

§. 2. The Divine Authority of any Writing must necessarily depend upon its own intrinsic Evidence, or else upon some External Testimony.

There can be only these two ways for the proving any Book, any written Tradition



*of the Christian Religion.* 3

dition really Divine, both which we have in the fullest manner that is possible.

§. 3. I shall not here have recourse to that way of proof, which some Men of Controversy have thought fit to make use of; and that is, to evince the Truth of the Miracles recorded in Scripture, and to vindicate 'em from an Imposture, by the Excellency of the Morals they were wrought to confirm; since altho' such a Method of Arguing may be convincing enough to some, yet there are those who will never be persuaded, notwithstanding all the Distinctions we can make to evade the Objection, that if the Truth of Miracles is to be demonstrated by the Morals they assert, there was any occasion for Miracles at all. And indeed upon a very plausible, and I'm afraid a very good Reason; because, if the Morality of any Doctrine is sufficient to make an extraordinary Action or Performance Divine or Miraculous, it will be likewise capable of stamping the same Character upon any Extraordinary or Mysterious Doctrine too; and by this means all Miracles will be set aside, as useless and insignificant to the proving of those Mysteries, for which, they say, they were primarily design'd, and we shall be reduc'd to no other Religion, than what plain Nature dictates

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to us. I mention this the rather, since I find it is chiefly the *Moralists* and *Soci-nians* in *Divinity* who chuse to argue in this way; and that others, who notwithstanding they mean well, submit too easily and tamely to their Opinions.

§. 4. Besides, I wou'd ask, Whether an Impostor cannot lay down good Moral Rules for our Conduct? 'Tis evident several Heathens, and *Pythagoras* in particular has done it in his *ἐπι ζευσῶ*, whom I more especially name, upon the account of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, who was an Impostor, and one of his Disciples and Followers; and consequently it is a Natural Power and Faculty, which any one may have, who do's but enjoy his Reason; as *Morality* is indeed only several Deductions from it. If therefore an Impostor may work Miracles, by the Power of the *Devil*, and may propose to the World a Rational and Pious Doctrine, by the force of his own Mind, which is suppos'd to be the case of *Tyaneus*, how can the Goodness and Reasonableness of any Doctrine be an Argument for the Divinity of any Action?

Which, after all we can say, must receive its Denomination from its own Nature, and from nothing else, by what we can at present apprehend.

§. 5. I

of the Christian Religion. 5

§. 5. I know our Blessed Saviour's Words are produc'd on this occasion, and it is alledg'd, that he appeals to his Doctrine to justify his Miracles; that he says, *A Kingdom divided against it self cannot stand*; and if by *Beelzebub* he casts out Devils, he asks, *By whom their children cast 'em out?* To all which the answer is very obvious and plain, that he equally insists upon the *Divinity* of his Doctrine, not the bare *Morality* of it, with that of his Miracles; and if the Extraordinary Wonders he wrought were not able to convince 'em, it was very just for 'em at the same time to consider, whether *he did not speak as never any man yet spake.*

§. 6. We shall therefore proceed in a different way from what others have done, and endeavour to shew,

*First*, The Divine Authority of the Scriptures from External Testimony, independent of, and separate from their Internal. And

*Secondly*, From their Internal Testimony, distinct and abstracted from the External; from the Majesty and Greatness of the Doctrines they comprehend, as superior to any thing else; but the Divine Character and Authority with which they are invested.



## 6 *A Demonstration of the Divinity*

We shall begin with the External Testimony, which consists of two parts, the Humane and Divine.

§. 7. The Humane Testimony, which we have for the Truth of these Sacred Oracles of our Religion, we shall first consider, and on which, at this distance of Time, the Divine, I mean, the External, must of necessity be founded; for it will be impossible for us to know there was one Miracle wrought, one dead Person rais'd to Life, unless from the Assurance and Observations of those who were Eye-witnesses of it. Let us therefore enquire what it is that is requisite to the making any Humane Testimony infallible, in the present circumstances of time and place so remote from us, and then examine whether we have not all the Demonstration that is possible in our case, for the certainty of these Holy Writings.

§. 8. There is nothing therefore more requir'd to make such an Evidence indisputable, than the Veracity of the Attesters, and a continu'd succession of 'em from the earliest Times, from the very Times in which these Books were wrote: If the Authority of 'em has been constantly maintain'd from their first being publish'd, thro' all the Ages of the Church,  
and

and by Men whose Fidelity and Credit we have no manner of Reason to suspect; there cannot be any thing more that we wou'd desire for our Satisfaction in this point.

§. 9. But before we enter upon this Argument, we shall take the liberty to complain of the Hardship that is put upon us, by the Opposers of our Religion, in requiring a Proof of the Authentickness of those Books, which stand as clear from any just Reproach of their being falsify'd, as any other Book or Author whatsoever, whose Reputation they are yet willing to vindicate, and wou'd take it amiss, if we shou'd dispute it with 'em.

Let us instance in *Cicero, Sallust, Livy* or any of the Writers of the Age, in which, or at no great distance from it, these Books were penn'd; is it not a little monstrous that Men, who shall read and be conversant with these Authors, shall take them to be of undoubted Authority, and sully acquiesce in them, that they shou'd cavil against these *Scriptures* we defend, which in all Reason and Sense have the same right to be thought Authentick and Genuine, which were writ about the same time, and whose Authors have nothing more lies against 'em than the Writers we have men-

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tion'd, excepting the Calumnies of their Adversaries.

§. 10. And since the whole Issue of this matter is in reality upon that foot, give me Leave to put the *Authors* we have nam'd in the same Circumstances with the Holy Apostles and Evangelists of our Lord, and enquire however Authentick *they* are now acknowledg'd to be by our Opposers, whether *they* would not fall under the same or a greater necessity of a Vindication from them, which they yet endeavour to oblige upon us in respect of the *Holy Scriptures*. Had *Tully*, *Livy* or any of the Ancient Writers in *Rhetorick* or *History*, struck at the Foundations of a Worship and Superstition, which had possess'd all Mens Minds, by which thousands and those of the subtillest and acutest parts, and consequently who would be the severest and worst Enemies, were supported and maintain'd, on which the *Roman*, that powerful Empire, was in a manner establish'd, and with which at least it was strictly united and interwoven; had any of 'em done this, which the *Blessed Evangelists* and *Apostles* actually did, shou'd not we have had their Writings and Works every where decry'd, Exceptions rais'd against 'em, and a hundred Arguments contriv'd, and  
little



little Falshoods invented to overturn and sink the Credit and Reputation of 'em? 'tis in some sort necessary to Human Nature, and therefore we may conclude they wou'd have met with such a Treatment.

§. 11. But what shall we say, when without any such Provocation there have *Wits* started up, who have in fact endeavour'd to prove 'em Spurious, and that there is not one Genuine piece of Antiquity of all those so much celebrated amongst us, excepting *Virgil* and *Pliny*, and I think, one or two more; when Men of Learning and Sagacity can thus wanton in Argument, and can take a Pleasure in Criticizing away the Authority of a Writer, out of a meer Humor of Dallying, what may we conceive they wou'd not have done, had they been whetted on by Resentment? Provocation sharpens the Understanding, and supplies it with abundance of Wit to Cavil and Object, and it is hard to say, whether, in such Circumstances, the best and most approv'd amongst the *Greek* and *Roman* Authors, wou'd not have lain under other Suspicions of being forg'd, than at present they do.

On the contrary, in these very Circumstances, the *Holy Scriptures* have stood the

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the Shock of innumerable Adversaries, and are still untainted in their Reputation, amidst the unjust Reproaches of Both *Jews* and *Heathens*, who wou'd have found their Account in it, if it had been possible for 'em, by any means, to have invalidated their Testimony, and exploded 'em out of the World.

§. 12. We only mention this, to shew the Unreasonableness of this Request, since it, at the same time all things consider'd, obliges those who make it, to justify and prove the Authority of any *Classick* Writer they can name, which ev'ry body, as well as themselves, owns to be good and indisputable; and yet perhaps wou'd be difficult enough to evince by Positive and Direct Arguments, and of which Demand therefore we might very deservedly complain; but since Complaints are of no use with those, who, it is to be fear'd, are beforehand prepar'd not to regard 'em, we shall proceed from several Particulars to evidence the Truth and Authority of the Books of *Holy Scripture*; so as we hope there will be no room left in the least to doubt of 'em.

§. 13. And first, the Human Testimony that we have for 'em is altogether irresistible,

resistible, down from the Council of *Laodicea*, which was held about the Year 365 from our *Lord's* Incarnation, wherein the Canon of Scripture was fully asserted; and from thence was read in all Churches, cited on all occasions, and appeal'd to in all Controversies of Faith and Doctrine, to the present Time we live in: I speak of the Canon of Scripture in General, for, as to the several Books of which it is compos'd, some of which had a later Reception in the *Church of Christ* than others; we shall consider them apart, when we come to speak more distinctly to 'em; but from the Council of *Laodicea*, there is, I say, such invincible Evidence for their Authentickness, by the multitude of Quotations from them in all *Ecclesiastical* Writers, down thro' ev'ry Age from that Time, and I had almost said ev'ry part of an Age, that there is not any Book extant which is capable of so entire a Proof of its not being supposititious, as the *Holy Scriptures* are; and this, so far as this Council goes, the most Inveterate of our Enemies will not disown. Other Authors, unless such as are of the first Class, (and they too in some measure) depend upon a kind of *Oral Tradition* for their Credit and Repute of being Genuine; nothing of which is wanting in our Case, whatever the *Romanists* may



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may pretend. The Authority of the *Scriptures* is sufficiently prov'd by the *Written Tradition* of the Church; and it wou'd not be hard, however laborious it might be, to trace 'em up by it almost thro' every the minutest period of Time to that Council.

§. 14. If we go back 40 Years to the first *Oecumenical Synod* in 325, we have express Passages cited out of these *Sacred Writings* in the 2<sup>d</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Canons, the *Scriptures* are appeal'd to by Name, and those Practices condemn'd which were contrary to them: from whence it is evident, there was then a Standard of *Holy Writ* fixt, which serv'd as a Rule, by which they might judge of the Rectitude or Pravity of their Actions, and their Conformity or Repugnance to the Religion they own'd. But that this *Rule* was the same in the main Parts of it with that which was afterwards defin'd by the Fathers of *Laodicea*, any Rational Man must conclude, unless he can assign upon what account the first Epistle to *Timothy*, which is there quoted, shou'd be more Genuine than the rest.

§. 15. Besides, in 354 *Hilary* of *Sardinia* writ his *Questions* upon the *Old* and *New Testament*, and his *Commentaries* on *St. Paul's Epistles*. In 344 *Vitellius* an *African*

*African* and a *Donatist*, put out a Book against the *Catholicks*, as Traditors or Betrayers of the *Holy Scriptures*, to the Enemies of *Christianity*. About 334 *Theodorus* Bishop of *Heraclea* in *Thrace*, publish'd his *Commentaries* on *St. Matthew* and *St. John*, and on *St. Paul's* Epistles. About 325, the very Time of the First General Council, *James* a Bishop in *Mesopotamia*, and who was a strong Asserter of the *Faith* in that Council, wrote a Book to prove the Real *Advent* of our *Lord*, from the sole Authority of the *Scriptures*.

And lastly, *Eusebius*, at or before the same Council, writ his *Eclogæ* upon the whole *Scriptures*, his *Commentaries* upon the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, and concerning the *Disagreement* of the *Holy Evangelists*; than whom there is no one who more diligently enquir'd into, or more perfectly understood the Antiquity and Authentickness of the *Sacred Writings*.

§. 16. It wou'd be endless to mention the numerous Citations from them, by *St. Athanasius* and the Fathers that writ in those Times; it is sufficient for our Purpose, that by the Passages we have given in *Ecclesiastical History*, several parts of 'em were commented upon, that Persons were accus'd for betraying of 'em; that

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that Books were wrote, and disputed upon their Authority; and that there was not the Interval of above 10 Years, when one or other of these were not done, from the Council of *Laodicea* up to the Council of *Nice*: Is it therefore imaginable, or can any one reconcile it to his Sense, that the Decisions of the *Fathers* of the one, was not agreeable to the Apprehensions and Thoughts of those of the other; and that the Canon of *Laodicea* was not in the Principal and Eminent Books of it, the same with the *Nicene*, since the Times betwixt those two Councils give us a great many particulars of the Canon of *Laodicea*, and speak of the *Scriptures* as collected into a Body, and which the Council of *Nice* it self does? Either therefore the Council of *Laodicea* was before that of *Nice*, or if it was after, as all the World knows, it is evident the Canon of the former must depend upon the Authority and Sense of the latter.

§. 17. But all this we have said will à *fortiori* be true, if we prove that the very same Canon of *Scripture*, with that of *Laodicea*, was decreed and establish'd long before the Council of *Nice*; which is manifest from the 85<sup>th</sup> *Apostolical Canon*, whose Authority the late Learned *Bishop* of *St. Asaph* has evinc'd beyond Exception.

That



That Canon expressly names the several Books recited by the Council of *Laodicea*, and differs in nothing as to the *New Testament*, but in adding the *Constitutions* of *Clemens*, and his *Acts* of the *Apostles*, which the other rejects; and in rejecting the Epistle of St. *Jude*, which the other receives. And in all probability by what the same Learned Person alledges, This Canon was made a 100 Years at least before the first General Council.

§. 18. If this however is not sufficient Evidence, we have an undoubted Testimony from *Origen*, who wrote about the same time; and who in a manner seems to have been rais'd, by the Wonderful Providence of *Almighty God*, to be a Witness of the Canon that was then universally receiv'd. Besides his *Homilies* upon the *Old Testament*, which we do not consider at present, Antiquity has left us either actual Monuments or positive Records of his Comments upon the Four *Evangelists*, upon the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, upon St. *Paul's* Epistle to the *Romans*, his First to the *Corinthians*, upon his Epistle to the *Galatians*, to the *Ephesians*, to the *Colossians*, his First to the *Thessalonians*, upon his Epistle to *Titus*, upon his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, and a Promise of his expounding the *Revelations*.

This

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This great Man was born at *Alexandria* in 186, and flourish'd about 230; so that it is almost impossible that these Books he employ'd such Industry and Pains upon, shou'd not be at that Time of the greatest Credit and Reputation imaginable in the *Christian Church*, that they shou'd not be such as were then accounted of unexceptionable Authority.

§. 19. 'Tis true, he does not Comment upon all the Books which were embrac'd by the Council of *Laodicea*, nor do's he upon the Second Epistle to the *Corinthians*, by what we know, nor upon the Second to the *Thessalonians*, which no one however will make any Objections against, as to their Authority, that will not disown the First that were writ to those Churches; tho' it is not improbable but he might have left *Homilies* upon *them* too, notwithstanding they are lost to us, because not quoted by *St. Jerome*, as the other two are; or if not, it is plain he did not leave Discourses and Explanations upon all the Books he design'd, since we have none upon the *Revelations*, which he promis'd in his Treatise upon *St. Matthew*. In fine, it is certainly next to a Demonstration that the whole Canon of *Laodicea*; I still mean in the Chief parts of it, was as early as this Excellent Man

Man, seeing he alone, as we are fully inform'd, went thro' so much of it, and it is not evident but he went thro' all.

§. 20. Since therefore *Origen* was born in 185, and it is not conceivable that he shou'd spend so much time and labour upon Books that were newly contriv'd, and which had their Birth in or near his own Age; what can we reasonably conclude, unless that they dated their Authority from at least the Age before, which will fall in with that of the Blessed Apostles and Evangelists themselves? And here we shall at present finish our Enquiries, reserving what remains from the times of *Origen*, to those when these Books were writ, for our following Discourse.

B

Dis-



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DISCOURSE II.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. **I**N our former Discourse, upon the present Subject, we endeavour'd to prove the *Authority* of the *Holy Scriptures* from *Humane Testimony*, upon which, as we said, the Divine, that was External, did most evidently depend; in consequence of this we trac'd them up from the Council of *Laodicea* (and from thence the worst of our Adversaries will allow them to be Authentick) to the times of *Origen*; and one wou'd think there were no farther occasion to pursue the Argument, since the Books that were Sacred, and esteem'd so in his time, cou'd not in all *Humane* Sense have a *later* date than the Age of the *Apostles*.

§. 2. Some, notwithstanding, who are willing to put all on the foot of Reason, and who can easily imagine how *Moses* shou'd come to know, without any particular Inspiration from *Almighty God*, the History of the *Antedeluvian* World, from the first Creation, by a Tradition from *Adam* to *Methuselah*, from *Methuselah* to *Sem*, from *Sem* to *Abraham*, and so to *Moses*, who lived at least 300 Years after,

after, will scarcely grant us, that it was possible for *Origen* to judge of what Writings were unquestionable, by the *short* Tradition only of a 100 Years: We shall go on therefore, and prove that from *Origen* up to the *Apostles*, the Canon of *Laodicea*, was, in the principal parts of it, receiv'd and entertain'd by the Church of *Christ*.

§. 3. I am aware, however, that we must here proceed in a different Method from that which we before propos'd, which was, of shewing, that these Books were generally embrac'd by the *Comments* made in ev'ry Age upon 'em, of which we find few more Antient than those we have nam'd; the Reason of which is, that *Christianity* from the times of the *Apostles*, to those of the Learned Person which we have so often mention'd, was engag'd with the *Jewish* and *Heathen* Controversies, and was therefore less at liberty to attend to its own Genuine Productions; the Writings of the holy *Apostles* and *Evangelists*, the first Christians knew were secure against all Allegations that cou'd be offer'd to disprove them in *those* Times, *when* such Objections might have been confuted at pleasure; and therefore we perceive the Strain of the Authors we are now to consider, is not to vindicate the *Scriptures*,

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which were acknowledg'd, or to explain 'em, since they were perfectly understood.

The Writers of that first Age after the *Apostles* had nothing to do, but to shew either the Reasonableness of the *Christian Doctrine*, contain'd in these *Sacred Repositories* of it, against the *Heathens*, or to justify the Explanations of the *Old Testament*, which were brought in proof of our *Saviour's* being the *Messiah*, against the *Jews*, or else to confute the Heresies which were form'd upon the *Apostolick Writings*; so that instead of Commentaries upon, we must have recourse now only to Citations from them.

§. 4. And first, *Clemens* of *Alexandria* particularly distinguishes betwixt the *Apocryphal Gospels*, extant in *his* time, and those that were handed down by the *Church* as Authentick, namely, the four which we now receive. He likewise makes use of several Passages out of 'em, and out of the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, the Epistle to the *Romans*, both the Epistles to the *Corinthians*, the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, that to the *Philippians*, to the *Colossians*, the First to the *Thessalonians*, the First to *Timothy*, to *Titus*, to the *Hebrews*, the First Epistle of *St. Peter*, the Epistle of *Jude*, and the First Epistle of *St.*



St. *John*, as a late Learned Writer has, with a great deal of Pains and Industry, collected them into one view, which lay scattered up and down, and dispers'd in the Works of that Author. This Person was about 30 or 40 Years before *Origen*, and flourish'd in 190.

§. 5. *Ireneus*, who was still earlier than *Clemens*, by more than 20 Years, quotes the same Epistles and Gospels, which *Clemens* afterwards did, and moreover the Epistle to the *Galatians*, and the Second to the *Thessalonians*. He was the Disciple of *Polycarp*, whose Character he has taken care to transmit to us, that he was not only instructed in the Principles of *Christianity* by the Apostles, and familiarly convers'd with those who had seen our Blessed Lord, but that he was ordain'd Bishop of *Smyrna* by them: 'Tis therefore wholly incredible that *Ireneus* shou'd not be fully inform'd, by so great a Master, that the Books he gave such an ample Testimony to, were of undoubted Authority: As to what respects the Gospels in particular, he tells us, *That our Saviour gave the Apostles a power to preach the Gospel, that they by the will and appointment of God deliver'd down in writing this Gospel, which was the Foundation and Pillar of Faith, that they were only four,*

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and their number was as fix'd and unalter-  
able as the four Cardinal Points of the  
World, however Hereticks endeavour'd to  
encrease 'em. Theophilus of Antioch also,  
who was Contemporary with Irenæus,  
writ certain Commentaries on the Four  
Gospels, from which St. Jerome transcri-  
bed several Passages into his own; and in  
his Confutation of the Heresy of Hermoge-  
nes, the same Bishop of Antioch makes use  
of the *Apocalypse* of St. John, to prove the  
Erroneousness of the Opinions he oppos'd.

§. 6. We shall not speak of the several  
Forgeries of the *Gospels*, the *Acts*, and  
St. Paul's Epistles, which were trump't up  
in those times by Marcion, the Ebionites,  
Valentinus, the Simonians and others,  
which are all, notwithstanding, very just  
and good Arguments for the truth of  
that Canon which we defend, since so  
many counterfeit ones swarming every  
where, leads us to a very rational Con-  
clusion of the high Authority and Value  
of the Original, from which they copy'd;  
that of Marcion more especially, which  
was distinguish'd into *Gospels* and *Epi-  
stles*, answerable to that of the Orthodox  
Christians; but Marcion is plac'd about  
the Year 130 or 140, in the same time  
with Justin Martyr, and twenty Years  
higher than Irenæus.

§. 7. And

§. 7. And since we have mention'd *Justin Martyr*, we cannot omit the witness he gives likewise to the Canon of Scripture; the Gospels he terms *ὑπομνηματῶματα*, the *Commentaries* of our Blessed Lord's Life and Actions, in opposition to the unnatural and imperfect Accounts of him, which were receiv'd by some; he also calls them the *Commentaries* and *Gospels* of the Apostles (*Καὶ τοῖς ἐκείνοις ἀκολουθησάτων*) and of those who attended upon them, suitable to the sense which the Primitive Church had of 'em, that two of them were writ by those Divinely-inspir'd Authors, *St. Matthew* and *St. John*, and the other by *St. Mark* and *St. Luke*, who were the Companions of *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, and attended on them; and that this was *Justin's* meaning seems evident from *Tertullian*, who writ about the time of *Clement* of *Alexandria*, namely in this very Century, and towards the end of it, he expressly says, *Constituimus imprimis Evangelicum instrumentum Apostolos Authores habere, quibus hoc munus Evangelii promulgandi ab ipso Domino sit impositum*, which is agreeable to what *Irenaeus* before had said §. 5. *Apostolis datam fuisse ab omnium Domino Evangelii praedicandi potestatem, ipsos per Dei voluntatem Evangelia scriptis tradidisse*: *Tertullian* goes on, *Marcus quod edidit, Petri*



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*affirmatur, cujus interpretes Marcus, & Luca Digestum Paulo adscribere solent*; which exactly corresponds with the sense of *Justin*: *Justin* farther cites several places out of the Gospels, and tells us, that some part or other of 'em was publicly read every Week in the Churches of the *Christians*, together with the Writings of *Moses* and the *Prophets*.

§. 8. And if we had nothing of all this from that famous Apologist, the Gospels are sufficiently prov'd from the *Diatessaron* of *Tatian*, a Scholar of *Justin's*, which was nothing else than a compendious History of our Lord's Actions, compil'd and digested from the Four Evangelists; tho' indeed with the omission of the *Genealogy* of *Christ*, which is charg'd upon him, as done upon the account of his being of the *Valentinian* Heresy, which deriv'd our Saviour from certain imaginary *Eons* of its own Invention and Contriving. 'Tis true, *Justin* makes no mention of the *Epistles*, because it is probable he had no occasion to do it; however he gives a very significant Character of the Authority of the *Revelations*; the Credit of which Book, notwithstanding, was constantly acknowledg'd to be in no respect superiour, if we say no more, to that of the others of which he is silent, *καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος ὁ λόγος*, says he *ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος*

*τοῦ λόγου*

νομα Ἰωάννης εἰς τὰς Ἀποστόλων, & Χειρὸς οἱ Ἀποκαλύψει λεγόμενι αὐτῷ χιλία ἐτη ποιήσιν προφῆταις; can any one therefore persuade himself, that *Justin* shou'd speak with that Veneration and Esteem of the *Revelations*, and not have at least the same value for Writings, which always possess'd both before and after his time an equal Repute with them in the Church of God.

§. 9. And now we are at length come to the Age of the Apostles, where *Poly-carp* in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, in the Year 115 or 116, cites certain places from the *Acts*, from the first Epistle of St. *Peter*, and the first Epistle of St. *John*; and therefore we may justly presume, if those were accounted to be Authentick by him, the Gospels and St. *Paul's* Epistles were so too; the former since the Canon of the Gospels was precedent to that of the Epistles, and the latter since St. *Peter* himself makes mention of 'em; nor indeed, as it appears by an Eminent Person, whose Authority we may rely on, tho' he brings no Instances of it, are there Quotations wanting from St. *Paul's* Epistles in the Writings of this early as well as Blessed Martyr.

§. 10. Lastly, to sum up all, the Scriptures were originally divided into the *Evangelick*

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*lick* and *Epistolick* or *Apostolick* Canon; the first contain'd the Gospels, and the last the Epistles: as to the *Gospels* all the History and Tradition of the Church agree, in fixing the Collection of 'em into one Canon betwixt 90 and 100 by St. *John*; the same History and Tradition tell us, that the Gospel of that Apostle was writ by him at the request of the *Asiatick* Bishops, and was added as a Supplement to the rest, in order to compleat the *Evangelick* Canon, which from thence was universally receiv'd and publicly read in all the Christian Assemblies. The *Epistolick* or *Apostolick* Canon was not much later, it was evidently before the Heresy of *Marcion*, which had its rise in 127, since he divides his Books into the Εὐαγγέλιον and Ἀποστολικόν, or the *Gospel* and *Epistles*, in imitation of the Canon which was then acknowledg'd.

§. 11. But that which sets the whole Canon, both of the *Epistles* and *Gospels*, as high as it is capable of being put, and which carries it up to the very times of the Apostles within ten Years, is the Testimony which we can never sufficiently value of St. *Ignatius*, and which the Incomparable Dr. *Grabe* has produc'd to the Learned World, out of the Epistle to the *Philadelphians*, whose words are *οὐκ ἔστιν*



καὶ τὰς Εὐαγγέλιον ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς Ἀπο-  
στόλοις ὡς ἀποστολικὰ Ἑκκλησιαστικά καὶ τῆς πα-  
λαιᾶς δὲ ἀναπόμνη, in which passages he  
plainly signifies, the Gospels, the Epistles,  
and the Old Testament, to be those Books  
which constituted the whole Sacred Canon  
in the Apostolick times, and, which ano-  
ther Great Person proves, was the Inten-  
tion and Meaning of St. Ignatius, from se-  
veral places which he alledges out of the  
same Author.

S. 12. That these Epistles are genuine  
has been evidenc'd beyond contradiction,  
by the Famous Dr. *Hammond* against *Blon-  
del*, and by the Celebrated Bishop of  
*Chester* against *Dollé*, and all the Obje-  
ctions of our Modern Sectaries; as to what  
concerns St. Ignatius himself, he suffer'd  
Martyrdom under *Trajan*, about the Year  
115 or 116, and writ his Epistles as he  
was passing thro' *Smyrna* and *Troas* to  
*Rome*, in order to receive his glorious  
Crown the End and Triumph of his Faith,  
and his most holy Confession, which he  
seal'd and testify'd with his Blood. 'Tis  
reported of him, that he was the Young  
Child which *Jesus* took up in his Arms,  
and that from thence he deriv'd his Name  
of *Θεότοκος*; however tho' this is demon-  
strated to be a Fable by the Learned *Pear-  
son*, it is yet a confirmation of the exceed-  
ing

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ing Primitiveness of this Author, since such a Romance cou'd not, with any appearance of truth, be contriv'd and forg'd concerning him, if Antiquity had not known him to have been contemporary with, that is, to have liv'd in some part of that time in which our *Blessed Lord* was upon the Earth. Moreover it is agreed he was advanc'd to the See of *Antioch* by St. *Peter*, that he maintain'd a particular familiarity and intimacy with the Apostles, and receiv'd his Informations in the Christian Religion from them.

§. 13. If therefore the *Gospels* and *Epistles* were form'd into a *Canon* presently after a 100, it is altogether improbable, and it will be the hardest thing in the world to believe, that the Books themselves were not writ the Age immediately preceeding, and by those Apostles whose Names they are distinguish'd by; the *First*, to wit, that they had their Date in the times of the Apostles is evident, and as to the *Last*, if Books cou'd be penn'd whilst the Apostles were living, and with their Names affixt to 'em when they were not their own, if they cou'd be sent about to all places, as it is plain they were from the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, οὐ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐπιχαλεμνοῖς ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, so as to impose upon the whole community of  
Chri-

Christians, when, notwithstanding, these very Apostles went about visiting and confirming the Churches, and consequently had continual opportunities of obviating such Forgeries, if this cou'd be done, then nothing appears to be impossible *not* to be done; for surely if there is any absurdity, this is one, that for instance the Epistles to the *Corinthians*, (and the same may be said of the rest,) shou'd be receiv'd by that and the other Christian Churches for *St. Paul's*, tho' they were none of his, when notwithstanding he was either present in Person to these Churches, or by those whom he commission'd to inspect and to take care of 'em; since we must suppose in such a case, that either the *Corinthians* industriously conceal'd these Epistles from him, which went under his Name, (for which they cou'd have no reason, whether they believ'd them to be his or not;) or that *St. Paul* was willing to subscribe to the Imposture, and set his own Seal upon a Book which he was conscious to himself he never writ, which is not at least very natural for us to think he wou'd. On the contrary, if it is really impossible that Books, which were written in the times of the Apostles, with their Names prefixt to 'em, shou'd be receiv'd by the Christian Churches, if they were not genuine, since the *Canon* mention'd by



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by St. Ignarius, as to what respects the *New Testament*, is already prov'd to have been writ in the Age of the Apostles, tho' collected in his own; and since the Books of that Canon are put out under their Names, 'tis evident to a Demonstration, that they must be and were indited by the Apostles themselves.

And thus we have gone thro' the first part of our Argument from Humane Testimony, which was to shew a constant Succession of Witnesses in all Ages of the Church to these Sacred Writings, even up to the Apostles, and from thence to evince, that they were the certain and undoubted Authors of those Books, of which they have been hitherto reputed and esteem'd to be.

§. 14. And now let us make a short Pause, and reflect on the good Providence of God in preserving these Records, and these faithful Monuments of the Truth and Authentickness of the Scriptures, had the Acts of the Council of *Laodicea*, or the Works of *Origen*, or *Clemens*, or *Irenæus*, or the *Apostolical Canons* been fatally lost to us, how had we in a great measure fail'd in convincing our Adversaries by this way of Proof, which perhaps they wou'd chiefly require, that the Scriptures were not some *Pious Frauds* of

of the *Roman* See, to subdue us to its Prescriptions and Obedience, as every thing now a days which carries any appearance of *Religion* with it, is too fatally and cruelly branded with the odious Names of *Popery* and *Superstition*: I tremble to think what the Barbarity and Fury of one of those many Northern Nations, which fell into the *Roman* Empire, might have done in this particular, how easy had it been for one of 'em to have swept off at once, by a universal Deluge of Paganism and Ignorance, all the Histories of former Times, and the best and most valuable Memoirs of the Christian Church? must we therefore have disbeliev'd the Scriptures? We shou'd yet even then have had as much Evidence for their being Genuine, as we have for other Authors, whose Credit was never in any respect disputed by Wise or Prudent Men: namely this, That they were receiv'd down thro' all Ages, from their first being writ, for such as we now acknowledge 'em, since there cou'd have been no time assign'd, without a manifest absurdity, when they were impos'd upon the World, and the Cheat shou'd not have been immediately discover'd.

§. 15. Our Adversaries will, I presume, allow this impracticable in Learning, in putting

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putting a false *Roman Poet* or *Historian* upon us; and there is altogether the same or more reason to think, and believe it so in Religion; for we will only take one Principle for granted, That there has been a Body or Community of Christians ever since the first Foundation of our Religion, in some measure answerable to what there is now; we will therefore suppose, that down from the Apostles to this time we had receiv'd our *Christianity* by Tradition only, that no Scriptures were transmitted to us, and that there shou'd now come out several *Epistles* and *Gospels*, under the Apostles Names, can we imagine the World (unless there were some innate Characters of their Truth and Divinity, which indeed these have, as we shall afterwards shew) *can we imagine the World* wou'd receive 'em for Authentick? And what reason is there for us to believe that any other Community of Christians wou'd do what we wou'd not, unless perhaps that we reckon our selves wiser than all those that have been before us, and take a pride in valuing our own Cautiousness and Sagacity, in preference to that of all Mankind besides; which at least is not the *best* Mark of that *wonderful* Discretion and Prudence we wou'd seem to asser to our selves. All Ages as well as Persons, have laid some Claim or other to



to their being *Wise*; and if the present has the truest Title to it, I am apt to think it is upon no other account, than because the preceding are gone, and are not here to contest it with 'em; but if former Ages and Communities of Christians had as good a share of Sense, as the present is suppos'd to have, since it is granted, we shou'd not be so *grossly* deluded, as to receive Writings for genuine which were never heard of before our own time; why shou'd we surmise or conclude that *others* wou'd, if those Writings were not so?

§. 16. However, we have no occasion for this Argument, which is the principal Basis of the Authority of other Books, (God be thank'd, and such is his good Providence) it is not one nor the frequent irruptions of several Barbarous Nations, nor even of the *Saracens* themselves, those implacable Enemies of *Christianity*, which have been able to despoil us of such mighty and invincible Testimonies to the Truth of the Scriptures, that if we can persuade our selves to wink against the Light and Force they carry with them, we may refuse to see, or perceive *either* in the Beams of the Sun.

In fine, there is all the Evidence for the Holy Scriptures, that ever was for the Authority of a Book; and a great  
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deal more, since there are more numerous Quotations out of them, by which they may be trac'd up to their first Original, than out of any other.

§. 17. 'Tis true, as we come nearer to the Time in which the Scriptures were wrote, these Quotations are rarer, as Streams grow less the higher they approach to their Fountains, for it can't be suppos'd, that the *Apostles* wou'd make much use of each others Writings, who were furnish'd with Inspirations of their own, or that those who immediately succeeded them wou'd, who had been fully instructed in the *Lively Oracles* of God, by the Apostles in person, and by consequence were in some sort inspir'd by them, and therefore had no occasion to have recourse to their Writings for Doctrines, which they had receiv'd from them by a more immediate Infusion; and thus much for the present.

§. 18. We have hitherto spoke concerning the constant Succession of Witnesses to the *Sacred Canon*, which we said was *one* requisite to make a Humane Testimony certain, the *other* was the Veracity of the Attesters, which we shall next consider.

Dis-

DISCOURSE III.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. **I**N those Discourses we have already had upon the Truth of the *Holy Oracles* of our Religion, we have brought the Argument concerning the Validity of the Scriptures thus far, namely, we have prov'd a continued Series of Attestations to the Truth and Genuineness of them, which was the first thing required to make any Humane Testimony, in such a case as this, which we at present consider, certain and infallible: The second is the veracity of the Attesters; *Eusebius, Origen, Clemens, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenæus, Polycarp, St. Ignatius*, and the rest, of whom we may presume to say, that they have at least an equal Claim to a Reputation of Integrity with any other Writers.

§. 2. But farther, that they were Men of undoubted Probity, is evident from their being ready, some of 'em, as *St. Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, to suffer the last extremities of Pain and Torture, and even Death it self, for the Faith which they profess'd; and others, as *Eusebius, Clemens, Origen* and *Irenæus*, to undergo the



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greatest Fatigues, and the severest and most laborious Studies, that they might be able to transmit a true Account of *Christianity* to succeeding Ages. This looks like Persons that were serious and in Earnest, and we have no reason to imagine they wou'd deceive and abuse us, since *that* might have been done at a much cheaper rate; besides, Study on the one hand, or on the other Afflictions and Calamities, and a prospect of Death approaching, naturally induce a kind of Austerity into our Minds, and forcibly incline us neither to speak nor act any thing but what is sincere, and agreeable to the Rules of Truth and Sobriety, and will scarcely leave us at liberty to entertain the very Thoughts of trifling, and imposing upon others; so that if we consult the natural Temper and Disposition of Men, which is always *necessary* in certain stated Circumstances, it is altogether improbable, that those who were in these, which we have describ'd, and who are the Asserters of the Sacred Canon, shou'd be even so much as capable of an Imposture, not to add their continual Mortifications and Self-denials, and the Persecutions to which they were constantly subject, which wou'd certainly teach them other Lessons, than those of Intrigue and Insincerity. It is likewise remarkable, that the earliest Writers

ters of the Primitive Church, and the first and most strenuous Advocates of Christianity and the Scriptures, were those who had been train'd up in the Rudiments and Discipline of the Heathen Philosophy, as *Dionysius of Athens, Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, Athenagoras, and Origen*; which as it did not usually prepare Men to receive and embrace either Writings as Authentick, or Articles of Faith as certain Truths, with *too great* a Fondness and Credulity, so it render'd them less capable of imposing upon others, what they had not the best and most powerful Reasons imaginable to be convinc'd of; I say, *less capable*, both in respect of that Impartiality and Integrity of Mind, which *Philosophy* for the most part introduces, and that Accuracy and Exactness of Judgment which attends it.

§. 3. However, cou'd we suppose they had admitted of an Intention to deliver down to us a false Scripture, it wou'd have been wholly impracticable here, unless they had done it by an unanimous Consent, and by proper Measures concerted amongst them; which how they cou'd be taken by those who liv'd in different Ages, and at several Years distance from each other, will be hard to conceive: If there were no such Measures contriv'd or en-

ter'd into, then each single Witness to the Sacred Canon, wou'd find himself under a plain Necessity of giving in a true and impartial Testimony to it, if he design'd any at all; since otherwise he must not expect it wou'd stand long, which in all probability wou'd have been contradicted and refuted by the next; and it is Matter of Fact, that this was the case, that they gave in an impartial Testimony to the Sacred Canon, since they all agree in their Evidence to these Writings; and seeing such an Evidence cou'd not be form'd and projected, and laid together before-hand, where Persons liv'd in distant times and places, *that* Harmony and Agreement cou'd be nothing but the effect and result of Truth, which will be the same in all Ages and Climates, and which alone cou'd unite Men remote and unacquainted, in the Affirmation of the same Thing. And this is the sum of that External Proof which *Christianity* and its Records afford us, for the Holy Canon of the Evangelists and Apostles, and indeed, to a truly sincere and unprejudic'd Mind, there can be nothing fuller for our Conviction.

§. 4. It has pleas'd *Almighty God*, notwithstanding, to imprint such innate Characters of Integrity on these Writings, and to set such plain and distinguishing Marks upon



upon them of their being Genuine, that we might very justly collect the Validity of them, from the several Passages they contain, which we call their *Internal* Testimony; and which added still to the *External*, will set the Evidence we have for their Authority as high as it is possible, and I am apt to believe will make the whole amount to no less than a Demonstration. The Arguments taken, from the Nature of any Writings, must either concern the Stile or Method, or the Matter and Subject of 'em; and, *God* be prais'd, there is not one of these which does not furnish us with sufficient Evidence for the asserting the Truth and Validity of the *Holy Scriptures*.

§. 5. The First Argument we shall consider, is drawn from the Stile and Expression of these Books, which is such as abundantly shews the Innocence and Integrity, with which they were wrote, and that they were not Men of Artifice and Design who penn'd 'em; for if Truth is to be measur'd by the Plainness and Simplicity of the Relations, there is nothing more Eminent and Conspicuous than *that* in every part of these Writings, so that they seem to have an Eye to nothing but a *Punctual* and *Faithful* Delivery of Matter of Fact, and are alto-

gether unconcern'd in what dress or fashion it is propos'd; this is obvious and easy for any one to observe, who do's but look into these Books, and will read 'em with any sort of Care or Attention.

§. 6. Thus in *St. Matthew*, *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him; But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness: Then he suffer'd him.* I give this only as an Instance of the Sincerity and Plainness of the *Holy Writers*, tho' there are a Multitude of other Places which confirm the same Character, or rather the whole Tenour of the Scriptures are in the same Strain, and shew that they were regardless of every thing, excepting what was really said or done, and to give a true and succinct Account of it, without any labour'd Stile or premeditated Expressions: But where there is a Negligence of the outward Dress or Fashion in Writings, 'tis strongly to be presum'd there is something more substantial within. to make amends for that, which in comparison is slighted and disregarded: and consequently that the Evangelists and Apostles of *our Lord* thought Truth so Beautiful

ful and Amiable in it self, and encompass'd with such bright and shining Excellencies, that it did not require any Fineness of Speech, or any Embellishments of Stile and Eloquence to adorn and recommend it.

§. 7. Secondly, The Second Argument we shall use to justify the Truth of these Writings, is from the Inaccurateness of the Narrations as to Time and Order, and the seeming Contradictions in them: St. *Matthew* says, *An Angel from Heaven roll'd away the Stone from the Sepulchre, sat upon it, and spake to the Women that came thither*: St. *Mark* makes this Divine Apparition to be, *A young Man, cloth'd in a long white garment, and sitting within the Sepulchre, whom the Women perceiv'd at their first entrance into it*: St. *Luke* describes 'em to be *two Men in shining Garments, and which came and stood by the Women, after they were come into the Sepulchre*; and began to be under some perplexity upon not finding the Body of *Our Lord*, in the place where they expected it to have been. Lastly, St. *John's* Account is of *Two Angels that sat within the Sepulchre*, and which were seen by *Mary*, not after her entrance into it, but upon her stooping down, and looking in. These various and differing Relations center in this, That there was a wonderful Angelick  
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Appearance at the *Resurrection* of Our Lord, which by the fright those were in, who saw the Vision, cou'd not be so perfectly describ'd to others; and the disagreeing in the Circumstances of it, is a Proof of the Sincerity of the Historians; for had they (we speak in general,) had they all deliver'd the very same things, without any Variation, their Exactness in ev'ry minute particular might have been interpreted a Contrivance, and they wou'd not have been without suspicions of having writ by Concert; but now that they are Unanimous in the most Material Points of their History, and seem to clash and interfere in some Incidents only, which are not essential to the Account: Their departing from each other in those inferior Matters, gives a mighty addition of Evidence to those greater and more important in which they agree: For, I say, we speak in general, and what is said of this Passage in respect to the Resurrection, is applicable to all others we find of the like Nature, where there appears to be any dissent as to Time or Place amongst the *Holy Writers*, which are only Circumstances that are indifferent, and do not enter into the Nature of the Actions themselves. For seeing the Design of the Scriptures was to instruct us in the Doctrines of Christianity, and to inform us  
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of the Wonders done by our *Blessed Lord*, it is not any ways necessary for us to know either the very point of Time or the Critical Place, when and where the one was deliver'd, or the other perform'd, since there is no accession from thence to their own proper Excellence and Divinity.

§. 8. And consequently it is a *vain* and *unthrifty* piece of Learning, to endeavour to make the History of our Saviour's Actions nothing less than plain and direct *Annals*; 'tis on the contrary more agreeable to suppose they were *Occasional Memoirs*, writ in several places, and with several views; that the Holy Spirit of God led the Blessed Evangelists into all necessary Truths, for the Propagation of the Christian Faith and Religion; but that for other Matters it pleas'd the *Divine Wisdom*, that they shou'd not be infallible, that even those circumstantial Errors and Mistakes might be an Advantage to the real Truths, which they propounded to the World; for let us consider what opinion we shou'd have probably had of the Gospels, if they had all of 'em been writ, in the same Order, and in the very same Words and Expressions; what shou'd any of us have concluded, unless that they transcrib'd from each other, and that the Evidence of all of 'em together was no  
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more than that of one single Evangelist. On the other hand, when we perceive 'em to differ in their Expressions, and not only so, but in other Matters likewise, which are of as little Importance, we have all the reason in the world to believe that these Gospels were writ by Persons who did not consult or transcribe from each other, and that they are true, as to what concerns our Faith and Belief as Christians upon that account, since abstracting from their Expression and other foreign Circumstances, which signify nothing to the Matter contain'd in them, and notwithstanding they were apparently penn'd by Men, who were not conscious to each others Designs, yet they very punctually agree in the Salutary Doctrines, and in the Miraculous Actions they propose to our Assent.

§. 9. Having consider'd the Stile and Method of these Writings, and what Arguments do naturally arise to us from them, for their Truth and Sincerity; the next we shall examine, is the Subject Matter of 'em: And first, if we give our selves leave to observe in reading of these Holy Writings, there are some *Passages of History* express'd in them so very *minute* and *singular*, and which are so peculiarly adapted to those Times, in which they are sup-  
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pos'd to have been first extant, that we cannot but think they are so many Evidences of the *Scriptures* being writ in them: As for instance, the reason of *John* the *Baptist's* being beheaded upon *Herodias's* Daughter dancing before *Herod*, and the Oath which that Prince made upon it, the Reconciling of *Herod* and *Pilate*, upon our *Saviour's* being sent from the one to the other, the Slaying of the Children in *Bethlehem*, &c. Which part of History is justify'd, by that Famous Saying of *Augustus*, that he had rather be *Herod's* Swine than his Son, who was suppos'd to have fallen in that Universal Massacre: As to the *Epistles*, all the Historical Passages contain'd in 'em do so exactly agree with the times, in which they are conceiv'd to be wrote, and with the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, that we need only to compare them with each other, to evince that they must receive their Birth and Origine from the Hands and Age of the Apostles. But this will be more fully evident, when we come to consider the several *Epistles* themselves.

S. 10. In the mean time, the Places we have recited out of the *Gospels* are either Historical Matters entirely forg'd and counterfeited, or else genuine Proofs of the true Age and Authority of the Sacred Writings; if the first, it is contrary to the

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the Plainness and Simplicity as well as Sincerity of 'em, which we have already confirm'd; if that notwithstanding has not been done, the Testimony of *Augustus*, in one particular at least, as is before alledg'd, wants still to be confuted: And lastly, if neither *that* is yet valid, these must be acknowledg'd to be Forgeries without a Design, and from which the Authors cou'd not propose any thing for the Service of Religion or for their own; and therefore may be justly esteem'd, by those who have allow'd themselves to entertain the worst Opinion of these ~~Holy~~ *Writers*, unfit and ridiculous to be invented by them; if they are real Truths in History, they seem to be of that nature so unnecessary to be known, and so unlikely to be preserv'd, that they cou'd scarcely be suppos'd to be deriv'd from any other Information, than that of the Times in which they were transacted, and consequently are a Demonstration that the Scriptures were then produc'd to the World. It were easy to collect several other Passages of the like kind, but as before in the two last Heads, we contented our selves to single out an Example or two, to shew the Meaning and Intent of our Argument; so in the present we have follow'd the same Method; tho' to give such Arguments as these their full force

force and moment, it wou'd be in a manner necessary to transcribe the whole Scriptures: However it will be sufficient if we point at the chief Lineaments and Characters, by which we may distinguish them, to have a just and perfect resemblance of the Times in which they are presum'd, and by all wise and understanding Men have been thought and confess'd to be wrote.

S. II. 2dly, We may argue for these Holy Writings, from those *private References* we meet with to *Persons* and *Things*, which cannot be explain'd without fixing 'em in the Age of the Apostles; but if any after Ages had cherish'd a fancy to impose these Books upon us as Apostolical, when really they were not, is it probable they wou'd have rested in such short and blind Intimations, so as we shou'd be oblig'd to find out by labour and search, what they were desirous we shou'd embrace as certain and undoubted, without the least Difficulty or Scruple? And here again we shall only mention some few Instances, tho' there are several others of the same import; thus the Gospel of St. *John* was design'd against the Heretical Opinions of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*; the first Epistle to the *Corinthians* in part, seems to be levell'd at the licen-

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tious Doctrines of the *Nicolaitans*; the second Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, in one Chapter of it, in all probability, has some respect to *Claudius*; and the second Epistle to *Timothy* to *Nero*; and in general the whole Scriptures of the New Testament appear to take such a negligent notice, if I may call it so, of the Times and the Transactions in them, that we cannot with any Sense imagine it was either affected or contriv'd.

§. 12. There is something in the *Air* and *Mien* of Persons, which as much distinguishes them as any thing else whatsoever; and so it is in Writings, and in particular with relation to the Scriptures, where the Natural and Genuine way in which they are writ, and as any one wou'd have writ, if he had liv'd in those Times, is as great a Proof that they were writ in those Times, as can possibly be had or suppos'd; and consequently *Jerusalem*, and the *Polity* of the *Jews*, is represented in the Gospels as yet standing; and the chief Arguments we meet with in the Epistles are such, as ly against *Judaism* and the *Philosophy* of the *Heathens*, agreeable to what we may justly conceive were the first Enemies Christianity wou'd be to engage; and all this is done in a manner that plainly declares, the Writers were not Men who  
had

had only a faint Relish of the Times there describ'd, and had deriv'd some Notion of them from dead Monuments, and flat Memorials concerning 'em; but such as were form'd and molded, as were train'd up and educated in them, and who deriv'd their Sentiments from the Opinions of the *Age*, without themselves almost being aware of it.

§. 13. *Men* generally receive their Temper, and the Complexion of their Minds, from the Conversation they keep, and the Principles they imbibe, which together with their Natural Powers and Faculties, is that which sets a Distinction upon them, by which they are differenc'd from all others; and so it is in *Ages*, which are likewise distinguish'd by their Inclinations and Humours, and the various Circumstances which surround 'em; so that a Man, as it were, takes his Being and Constitution from the Age he lives in, and his Thoughts are wholly turn'd and fram'd to the particular Occurrences of it, and consequently it is as impossible for a Writer of *one Age* to put on all the Qualifications, and if I may say the Peculiarities, that are the effect and result of the *former*, as it is to place himself in those certain and distinguishing Circumstances which are the occasion of them; or as it is for a Man who has been from his In-

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fancy leaven'd and charg'd with one kind  
and set of Thoughts, to shift and change  
'em as he pleases for another: There is  
something that is singular in all Ages,  
which cannot be transcrib'd into a suc-  
ceeding, no more than one Person can  
transform himself into any other Person,  
who is as different from him as can be  
well imagin'd; and thus it is in the present  
case, since the Apostles write as Men  
who had liv'd and convers'd in the Age,  
in which Christianity was first promulged  
to the World, and not as those who had put  
on the bare Semblance of such Authors,  
and endeavour'd only to personate and re-  
present them.

§. 14. But this will farther appear, if  
we consider under a third Head *the Af-*  
*fections* and *Passions* with which the  
Scriptures are wrote; and these are so  
evident in our *Saviour's* Sermons to his  
Disciples, in the zealous and most persua-  
sive Reasonings, and the pathetick Incite-  
ments to Piety and Goodness, which are  
to be found in the several Writings of  
St. Paul, and the other *Apostles*; they  
carry such a Force of Nature with them,  
and are so exactly expressive of those Re-  
sentments, which the Apostles might be  
justly and the truest suppos'd to admit,  
that if we can believe them to be any  
thing



thing else than the Genuine Productions of the *Apostles*, and those who convers'd with our *Lord* or his Disciples, we shall go a greater length, as to the point of being Credulous, than we cou'd be ever *said* or *prov'd* to do in the believing our Religion. For, if what we have before alledg'd is true, that Men receive into their Temper a particular kind of Tincture from the *Age* they live in, which it is almost impossible to derive into *another*, so as to make *it* appear the same, it seems to be more especially plain in respect to the Passions, since they are so exceeding delicate, and take such quick and sudden turns, that they do not look to be capable of being represented to the life out of the Person that has 'em; all the Imitation in the World can never sufficiently express that extreme Liveliness and Force they act with, and those who have the best Faculty at doing it, and have made it the Business and Employment of their Lives, (I mean the Retainers to the *Stage*,) with Reproach enough to themselves to mimic and dissemble them, have always betray'd a manifest Affectation, or at the best an Artifice, not agreeable to the Plainness and the Sincerity of Nature: and indeed for Men to put on those Affections and Passions which they really have not, is like what we perceive in the other

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Forces of Nature that are borrow'd, (as Light or Heat from the *Sun*,) which as they are always more faint and languid, so they are distinguishable enough by *that very* Infirmary from their true Source and Original.

§. 15. And now we have at length finish'd our Argument from the *Internal* Testimony of the Scriptures, consider'd as *Humane*, which these Writings contain for their being Genuine, excepting one Branch of it, which being a distinct Subject, we shall reserve for another Discourse; and that is, the Truth and Impartiality observable in the whole, and this may be justly reckon'd *one Part* of the Internal Evidence for the Genuineness of the Scriptures; since if we prove them to be true and impartial Writings, they must of consequence be Genuine ones, and cannot be suppos'd to have those Names or Times forg'd which are impress'd or stamp'd upon them; for which Reason the Integrity of these Authors has already been prov'd, from the Plainness and Simplicity of the Stile in which they writ, and from their Negligence and Unaffectedness, as to the Time or Order of the Transactions they relate. It is notwithstanding a *Different Subject*, and upon that account we shall wave it for the present,

sent; seeing, altho' we shou'd evidence the Scriptures to be never so *Genuine*, it wou'd not from thence follow that the Histories they give us were exactly *true*; for albeit it were granted, that *St. Matthew*, *St. Mark*, *St. Luke*, and *St. John*, and so of the rest, were the undoubted Authors of the *Gospels* which are receiv'd, we cou'd not from thence immediately conclude, that those *Evangelists* had deliver'd down to us plain and indubitable Matter of Fact, and that they had not impos'd upon us Spurious Doctrines, and Miracles of their own Inventing.

§. 16. This therefore we shall afterwards consider, and at present only add, in respect of the Scriptures being writ in the Times, of the Transactions of which they give an Account, that even in Fact and Experience, there is so manifest a Difference betwixt Books that are written by Men who have been present, and concern'd in Matters they Comment upon, and those who have not, that there cannot be well a greater: thus if we compare the *Greek* Rhetoricians, as *Demetrius* or *Aristotle*, with those of the *Romans*, as the *Author* to *Herennius* and *Tully*, or the Orations of *Demosthenes* with those of *Isocrates*, or those of *Cicero* with the Declamations of *Quintilian*, the Histories



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of *Xenophon* or *Thucydides* with *Herodotus*; or lastly the *Famous Historian* of our own Age, with others who have treated upon the same Subject, we shall evidently find there is this sensible distinction, that there is a Life and Vigour of Expression, a Strength and Sprightliness of Thought, and a Majesty and Greatness of Passion and Sense in the *one*, suitable to that Temper and Genius to which they had been form'd, and as it were excited and inflam'd by their several Pleadings, or the Actions in which they had been engag'd; whereas on the *other hand* we meet with little or nothing of all this, and are entertain'd only with dry and Philosophick Rules, or else a fine Cadence or Numerousness of Periods from the *Rhetoricians*; and from the *Historians*, as *Herodotus* with long and empty Accounts, which have little more, many of them, than their Antiquity, and the Smoothness and Accuracy of the Stile in which they are deliver'd to recommend them; and thus it is in the *Scriptures*, those *holy Oracles* which we defend, they are not, as will be evident to any one who reads them with the least attention, *they are not* jejune and studied Memorials of things which had been long before transacted, but speak the Sense of Men who had an intimate share and concern in what they transmit to us;  
and

and if we will not allow them that Character, we may with as great justice deny it to the best Historians, of either the Ancients or the Moderns, which is all the Reputation, in relation to these *Sacred Writings*, for which we at present contend.

#### DISCOURSE IV.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. **I**T has been hitherto prov'd, in the present Subject, that the Scriptures were written in those Times, and by those Persons which have been in the several Ages of the Church unanimously attributed and affixt to them; and this was done from the Multitude of Unexceptionable Witnesses, produc'd in Attestation of their Validity, as well as from their own Internal Evidence, of which they were pregnant.

§. 2. We are now to proceed, and shew the Veracity and Truth of the Holy Penmen of these Books, as before we endeavour'd to evince the Blessed Apostles and Disciples of our *Lord* to be the Authors of them. One part of this Argument is already spent on the Proof of their being Genuine, which we shall not repeat, only

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mention the Heads, namely, the Simplicity observable in the Stile of these Writings, which do not seem to carry any Artifice or the least suspicion of a Design in them; and their Negligence and Incuriousness, if I may say it, in respect of things that are circumstantial, which shews the Plainness and Unaffectedness of their Relations; whereas in those which are Material and of any significance and importance, and which concern the real Truth of the Matters they relate, and the Christianity they propose, we find an uncommon Agreement. We are therefore only farther to be reminded, before we pursue our present Argument, that tho' what is alledg'd without any other respect, than to confirm the Authentickness of the Scriptures, is no Proof of the Truth of 'em, yet, what is brought in Vindication of their Sincerity, is a certain and infallible Demonstration of *their* being writ by those Persons, and in the Times *they* set forth and pretend.

§. 3. Having premis'd this, we shall now go on to evidence the Impartiality that is apparent in the *Holy Scriptures* of our Religion; and after the two Arguments we have mention'd, let us in the next place reflect upon the other, which were offer'd to enforce and *convince* the Genuineness of 'em; and which, if truly  
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consider'd, do not rest there, but are likewise in some measure adapted to prove the Truth and Integrity of the Writings themselves: For that *St. Paul's* Epistles, as we shall afterwards demonstrate, when we come to explain them, so exactly agree with the History of the *Acts*; and that there is such a perfect Concord in the Evangelists that writ at different Times and Places; what are these but the express Marks and Characters of the utmost Truth and Sincerity, since when there is a Consonance in Historians of the same Age, and they write on the same Subject, consistently with each other, in the essential parts of it, and yet were not made acquainted with their mutual Designs, nothing but Truth cou'd lead 'em into such a Harmony.

§. 4. A second Commendation of the Sincerity of the Holy Scriptures, is, that they do not conceal or dissemble, even those Passages in which the Enemies of our *Blessed Lord* are represented to reproach his *Person*, or derogate from his *Religion*; as that *He cast out Devils by Beelzebub the Prince of them*; that some, and those of his own Kindred, accus'd him of *Madness*; that he was charg'd with *eating and drinking, with being a glutton, and a wine-bibber, and a friend of Publicans*

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*canes and Sinners*; and lastly, that instead of rising from the dead, *his Disciples stole him away*, and then spread about a Report that he was risen: as for the *Apostles of our Lord*, the Scriptures do not silence their Infirmities; *Judas* betray'd his Master, and *Peter* deny'd him; the Sons of *Zebedee* cou'd not dissemble their thirst and ambitious Desires after Dominion, nor *St. Paul* his Passion against *Peter* and *Barnabas*. But certainly *St. Luke*, the first *Christian Historian*, and the rest of the *Evangelists*, wou'd have been very cautious of inserting any thing in their Commentaries of the Life and Actions of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, which might look like a Reflection, if they had not preferr'd a true and impartial Relation of Matters of Fact, to what might appear perhaps more plausible and advantageous; and this is the reason that they fairly and candidly tell us, what was said in those times against our *Lord*, which it had not been difficult for them to have suppress'd. But they were on the other hand so sure of the many *Miracles* he wrought, and the mighty Performances he did, that they were not afraid to transmit to Posterity the *worst* Calumnies which the Malice of his Enemies had contriv'd against him, together with that *Divine* Character of which they were so thoroughly satisfy'd and convinc'd,

as *Wisdom* is justify'd of all her Children; so that this open and unreserved way of treating our *Blessed Saviour*, in respect of that *Envy* under which he lay with his Adversaries, and of recounting the *Actual Infirmities* of his Apostles, is grounded upon a confidence of the truth of the other parts of the *Evangelick* History, which wou'd infinitely overballance any prejudices which might arise from such however *unjust* aspersions on the one hand, or such *real* failings on the other; for had the Evangelists been conscious to themselves of the Falshood of what they wrote in general, concerning our *Saviour's* Miracles and Resurrection, and yet were desirous this Doctrine or Opinion shou'd obtain in the World, it is absurd and unnatural to think, or imagine they wou'd not have taken all the care that cou'd be, to smother and stifle any the least occasion that might be given for an Objection, against that which in its own Foundation was false, and they knew to be so; but when they were certain of the truth of what they deliver'd, as to our *Blessed Saviour's* Life and Miracles, and those of his Apostles, it was easy for them to contemn such suggestions, and to value no trifles that cou'd be offer'd in reproach to the Divine Person, they had so *familiarly* convers'd with, or the Religion which



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which they had so *well* chosen, and upon such *good* and *evident* Reasons.

§. 5. *Thirdly*, Let us farther consider, as was instanc'd before, that there are several places in Scripture, which do not punctually agree in the Circumstances of the Fact related; and that there are others which represent our *Saviour* many times as scarcely to be known by his own Followers after his Resurrection; such passages as these wou'd perhaps be apt to make Men question whether the one was true, and the other not an Imposture; on the contrary, since the same Writers in the first case plainly aver the Fact it self, and in the last assure us, that our *Saviour* appear'd in a publick and open manner to his Disciples, and that St. *Thomas* himself was convinc'd, by feeling the very prints and foot-steps of his Wounds in his Hands and Side; their differing in the more minute Circumstances, is an Argument of the Sincerity of that in which they agree (but concerning this we have already discours'd) and their explaining the Doubts and Scruples, which were in those Times, of our *Saviour's* being the *Messiah*, as it shews the first Christians were not to be impos'd upon; and their being afterwards satisfy'd about them, that they were so on no other Motive than

than real Truth and Conviction, so we have the greater reason to believe this from the Affirmations of those *Evangelists* and *Apostles*, who we find are as ready to give us an Account of the Suspicions and Jealousies of the Disciples, as to our *Lord's* Rising, and his being the same, as of the full and entire Evidence, which they afterwards had of his Appearing amongst them in his own Mien and Person: for what can be a greater Test or Instance of the Impartiality of an Historian, than to enlarge upon such Passages, wherein those of his own persuasion doubted of the Truth of that Doctrine and Opinion, of which he himself was perfectly satisfy'd, and in which he was fully confirm'd?

§. 6. *Fourthly*, We may also add, that the Scriptures are wrote with those Affections and Passions, which do not only prove the *Genuineness*, but the *Truth* of them; when our *Saviour* laments over *Jerusalem*, with that abundant Pathetickness, upon the account of its Unbelief; when he *prays* for his Murderers, and makes it one part of his Doctrine to *bless* our Persecutors, and to do all the good Offices for all the *ill*; when *St. Paul* wishes himself *accursed* for his Brethrens sake, *according to the Flesh*; when in that eminent Passage in the *Acts* he says, *King Agrip-*

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Agrippa, *believest thou the Prophets, I know that thou believest them*, and beseeches God he might be not *almost*, but *altogether* such a one as himself, excepting *those Bonds*; if there can be any greater signs of Truth or Sincerity than these, we must form a new Notion of our selves, and suppose that Men can be the most profligate of all Creatures alive, at the same time that we can't but own them to be the best in the Creation. For, is it possible for us, in any common sense, to imagine that Men wou'd disregard themselves at this excessive rate; or that our *Lord* himself wou'd, and retain a Value and Respect for all Mankind besides, upon any other Principle than of that Religion, which they knew to be true, and upon the certainty of which they wou'd forfeit their Lives, or any thing else, which was the dearest to 'em; as our *Blessed Saviour*, and his Disciples and Apostles did; but this will come under another Head, and therefore we shall at present say, that we have mention'd only some few Instances of the Genuine Passion observable in the Sacred Writings, which if we read with attention, there is nothing can give us such a lively Idea of the most affectionate Truth and Sincerity, as that which is impress'd from them.



§. 7. *Fifthly*, The particular References which are made to the Times, and the Circumstances of Matters as they then stood, as it was a Proof of the *Genuineness* of these Writings, so is it likewise of the *Truth* of them, because there is a sort of Unaffectedness and Integrity apparent in the negligent way in which they are intimated: thus our *Saviour* speaking of *John the Baptist's* Preaching in the Wilderness, asks the *Jews*, *What they went out for to see*; he supposes *John the Baptist's* Preaching as a thing well known in those Times, and the *Jews* coming together from all parts to hear him; this, and other Passages of the like kind, have such Native Distinctions, such peculiar Marks and Characteristicks of Truth in them, that there cannot be well greater; for where things are in that manner suppos'd and understood, it is a Sign they were so generally rumor'd about, and acknowledg'd, that it was unnecessary to make any express mention of 'em: and this is done, as if the Evangelist himself did not apprehend the Omission, it lying as a fix'd and settled Truth in his Mind to that degree, that he seems to forget that, others need to be acquainted with it. The same we find in the Person who had his Hand withered, where the Sacred Writer represents the *Jews* putting this Question.

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to our Blessed Lord, whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day, that they might accuse him? in which account he supposes our Saviour's Power of Healing, and the Envy of the Jews to Him, as what was universally known, and of which he was so absolutely persuaded, that it was either needless, or he had forgot to premise it; it wou'd not be difficult to produce a multitude of Examples to the same purpose, but we shall forbear to enlarge, and proceed to another Particular.

§. 8. A Sixth Argument for the Veracity of the Holy Writings, is from the Completion of those Prophecies which are contain'd in them; as our Saviour's Foretelling the Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the *Temple*, his promising the Comforter and the like, which were afterwards verify'd in the final overthrow of the *Jewish Polity*, and in the Effusion of the *Holy Ghost* upon the Apostles and Primitive Christians; nor is it a less Confirmation of their Truth, that they also justify in their Accounts the Prophetick Writings of the *Old Testament* concerning a future *Messiah*; since, as has been fully demonstrated by the very Learned *Huetius*, it may be plainly evinc'd that every passage almost in our Saviour's History is distinctly express'd in those Sacred Predictions.

§. 9.

§. 9. *Lastly*, The Temper and Genius of the Doctrine, advanc'd in the *Holy Scriptures*, is directly opposite to any base or sinister Designs of Deceiving and Imposing upon others; but if the Scriptures are not True, they fall under no better a Character: We are forbid *to ly*, and commanded *to tell the truth*; our Communication is *to be yea, yea, nay, nay*; that therefore the Scriptures shou'd be guilty of Lying, and Forgery in the very Precept they give against it, with the greatest Gravity and Seriousness, is so unaccountable and extravagant a piece of Dissembling, that it scarcely comes within a possibility of Humane Nature to receive it, for who wou'd be extremely solicitous for any Doctrine prevailing, and die in its Defence, when he has been all the while treating it with the utmost contempt, in acting contrary to it? The Apostles and Disciples of our Lord maintain'd this Doctrine, that we shou'd not *ly one to another*, that *Liars shou'd not inherit the Kingdom of God*, that *the Devil is the Father of them*; and, amongst the other Doctrines of Christianity, were ready to seal this with their Blood; and yet it is imagin'd possible for the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, in their *Practices* (if they impos'd upon us) to slight and undervalue that on which in their



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*Profession* they set so high a price, as that of their own Lives; or which is all one, that they had the greatest and the least esteem for the same thing, at the same time, which seems to be little less than a Contradiction.

§. 10. Thus far we have endeavour'd to shew the *Internal* Evidence, which the Holy Scriptures afford for their Veracity; the next we shall consider is their *External*, and which is likewise divided into several Particulars: The First we shall take notice of, is the Incapacity of the Authors of them to put a Fallacy upon the World; is it likely those Persons shou'd form a Design of imposing upon all Mankind, who were neither acquainted so far with Men or Humane Learning, as to be able to judge of the Passions, which were the most prevalent in our Natures, or of the proper Arts and Methods to excite them? They were Men, if we except St. *Paul*, and perhaps St. *Luke*, who had a narrow and stinted Education, who knew no more than what belong'd to their own poor and humble Employments, and may therefore be deservedly thought to admit of no other intention in writing, than what was perfectly sincere, than what was founded, not on any subtile or delicate Contrivance, but on what they plainly saw, and were Eye-witnesses to.

§. 11.

§. 11. *Secondly*, Besides this, had they been capable of inventing a Scripture for us, they must have foreseen too such a number of Difficulties against the Imposture succeeding, that those who had the Wit to contrive, wou'd have also had the Prudence not to divulge it: for let us grant our Religion and the written Traditions of it to have been false, and to have had no Foundation of Truth in it, what a mad and frantick Design must these Asserters of *Christianity* be suppos'd to engage in? A few Unlearned Fishermen, without any other Reputation than what their Manual Vocations, and their honest Industry had procur'd them, are to set up upon a Stock of Credit sufficient to convince the World of New and Unheard of Doctrines, upon their bare Word and Asseveration; they were to bear down, not only Heathens, but *Jews*, Men of their own Nation, and to whom they appeal, by plain dint of Assurance, with a Story of *Miracles*, and a *Resurrection*, when there was not one Syllable of Truth in the whole; when there was not one Village, not even *Chorazin* or *Bethsaida* in which some of his mighty Works were said to be done, or one single Person in *Judea* that ever heard or knew of any such thing: can we really believe so Romantick a Project wou'd ever enter into the Thoughts

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of any, who were not absolutely depriv'd of their Senses, or if it did, that the World wou'd not shew an equal Defect in their Understandings, to abet and encourage it? The truth is, those which think the Apostles and Disciples of our *Lord* cou'd admit of so wild an Extravagance as this, may as well suppose that they invented a *Messiah* too, and preach'd *Jesus* in all the Cities of *Judea*, as a Man who had convers'd among them, who was publicly condemn'd and crucify'd, whereas there was not, nor ever had been, such a Person in the World; and they might with equal Reason flatter themselves, that all Mankind was prepar'd to believe them.

§. 12. *Thirdly*, If we consider the Persecutions the Authors of these Books underwent, and the Martyrdoms they joyfully embrac'd in defence of 'em, it will be hard to conceive how it was possible for Men to be inspir'd with so firm a Zeal, unless upon the account of their own real Convictions; nor can it be urg'd in this place, that it is granted they might have a full and certain Persuasion of these things, and yet from thence it is not necessary for us to infer, that the Matters they deliver'd were true, since it is not evident but they themselves might be



be impos'd upon; such an Objection as this, we say, cannot stand here; because altho' in disputable Cases, the Conviction of the Mind is not always answerable to the Truth and Reality of those things we consider, yet in plain Instances of Fact, and in the obvious Occurrences of Life it is; the passages of our *Saviour's* History are concerning Transactions, which any one might easily judge of; for the Question only lyes in this short compass, Whether our *Saviour* did cure the Blind and Lame, or not? Whether He did raise the Dead, and perform those Miracles which are recounted of Him, and at last rise Himself after his Crucifixion, and publicly ascend into Heaven before his Disciples, or no? Those who tell us of these things, and profess themselves entirely convinc'd of them, by such remarkable Proofs of their Sincerity, as suffering the greatest Afflictions, undergoing the severest Persecutions, and dying for them, cou'd not be deceiv'd in a notoriety of fact, they must be certain whether these Matters were so or not; and it is therefore very evident in the present Case, that either the Scriptures are infallibly true, or else that Men can be suppos'd in great numbers to encounter Tortures and Death, with all the Serenity and Composedness in the World, in Assertion

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of a Flagrant and Blasphemous Falshood,  
and which they were conscious *was* one,  
which wou'd shew a Temper so mon-  
strously incredible, that not any Mystery,  
nor any Miracle, (whatever our Adversa-  
ries think of both,) cou'd possibly exceed  
the Incomprehensibleness of it.

§. 13. *Fourthly*, Let us joyn to this the  
constant Attestation of the *Church* to these  
Writings; for if we can imagine that Men,  
in these Times, cou'd be so far misled by  
Interest or Affection, or an unaccountable  
Zeal, to propose to the World, under the  
severest Persecution, what themselves did  
not believe; is it possible or likely that  
ev'ry one else, who follow'd them, shou'd  
take up the same Notions, except upon  
good grounds, and upon impartially weigh-  
ing and considering the Merits of that  
Religion and Cause, in which they were  
going to embark, and for which, in all  
probability, they must expect to suffer, if  
the Apostles of our *Lord* had a design to  
impose upon us; can we think that a whole  
Age cou'd enter into the same idle Pro-  
ject; or if all that Age, that all the suc-  
ceeding ones wou'd?

§. 14. Moreover, the Miracles of our *Bles-  
sed Saviour*, and the Acts of the Apostles,  
and the Writings of the Holy Pen-men,  
and

and inspir'd Authors to the several Churches were publick, were celebrated and known in the first Age; why was there no one that ever oppos'd them? That wou'd provethe Miracles Impostures, or the Writings false? Why, at least, wou'd not the following Age, if the former was more pleas'd with the Novelty, or less concern'd to confute it? Why, at last, and near the conclusion of 200 Years from Christianity, and from these Books being first publish'd to the World, have we no other Adversaries than *Celsus* and *Lucian*, both profess *Epicureans*, the one endeavouring to argue, the other to laugh and ridicule us out of our Religion? Why are we only still an Age after this at length attack'd by *Porphry*, that subtile and inveterate Enemy to Christianity, with Arguments against the Authority of the Scriptures, the chief of which were founded upon some appearing Contrarieties and Contradictions in them, and which, it has been already evidenc'd, are a Proof of their Sincerity? When besides, as it is well known, this Author took his Original Prejudice against the Religion, which he once profess'd, from certain Indignities he receiv'd from those who were the Promoters and Assertors of it: Why lastly, in the Times of *Dioclesian*, were the Acts of *Pilate* contriv'd and invented, and order'd



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der'd to be taught and committed to the Memory in every School; after the Genuine ones had been embrac'd, and accounted Authentick for near 300 Years? What cou'd be the reason of all this? unless that the Evidences for the Holy Scriptures, and the Christianity they affirm'd, were so plain and indisputable, that they cou'd not be contested, whilst the Witnesses of 'em were living and present, and were afterwards drawn into Controversy only by Men, whose loose and *Atheistical* Principles wou'd give them leave to say any thing, which their Wit or Parts cou'd suggest, in opposition to any Truth whatsoever, especially where it interfer'd with their particular Pleasure or Designs; which seems to be the case of *Celsus* and *Lucian*; or else by Men as *Dioclesian* and *Porphyry*, who had no other measure of Truth than their Resentment.

§. 15. Nor is it inconsiderable that Christianity, or the Scriptures of it, were never oppos'd, or endeavour'd to be refuted by the *Heathens*, as they were not at first by the *Jews*, till it was found their own Religion was at stake, and that the Truth of the one began, I presume, to be injurious to, as it prevail'd upon the other. Neither can it be said that this universal Attestation, which we now defend,

send, is of those who were prejudic'd on the side of Christianity; for, by that way of Reasoning, it will be impossible for any one to be an unexceptionable Witness, in any case that shou'd be offer'd, since the best Men must be of that side of the Truth or Merits of which they are convinc'd; and if they were satisfy'd of the Truth of *Christianity*, it was necessary for 'em to come under *that* Denomination; whereas, on the other hand, the Resentments and Atheism of those, who wrote against it, seems to carry the face of Insincerity and Prejudice with it.

§. 16. *Fifthly*, We shou'd now farther produce the Testimonies we are furnish'd with, for the Veracity of the Holy Writings, from both *Jews* and Heathens, or those who dissented from the Orthodox Faith, but these Arguments being of a distinct Nature, from what have been already alledg'd, we shall omit them at present, and only desire Men seriously to consider, whether, if nothing more was capable of being brought in vindication of the Scriptures, there is not enough to persuade us of the Certainty and Truth of them; for why, as before, I again ask it, *why* must we, *we* Christians, of all Mankind, be oblig'd to harder Rules and stricter Laws of Evidence and Demonstration,

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stration, in order to prove the Validity of an Author, than all other Men are? Much less than this wou'd have serv'd in the cause of a Heathen Writer, and if it is not sufficient in that of the Sacred, and Traditional Books of our Religion, let us beware, whilst we expect, in pretence, a Conviction of our Understandings, we do not in reallity appear to demand a cover for our Prejudice and Incredulity.

§. 17. 'Tis true, These are Moral Arguments for our Belief, but they are not less certain upon that account, since it is as impossible in Nature, for plain, sincere and upright Persons, to be the quite contrary, ill and designing Men, as it is for a Line or Angle to be different from it self. And that the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* of our *Lord* were such impartial and undesigning Persons, we have as many Arguments to convince us, as we can have, that there ever were, or still are, such Men in the World: For *God's* sake therefore, let us lay aside our unreasonable Cavils, and Scruples against the *Holy Oracles* of our *Religion*, let us firmly believe they were penn'd with the utmost Truth and Sincerity, and if we come with these Minds to the Study of 'em, we shall find our pains not misemploy'd, nor our time unfrugally or unprofitably spent about them.



DISCOURSE V.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. **W**E concluded, in our last Discourse upon *This Subject*, with the Proof of the Veracity of the Holy Scriptures, from the constant *Attestation* of the *Church* to them; we are now to proceed and shew the Evidences we have for them, from *foreign* Witnesses, who either dissented from the Christian Faith, or were not profess'd Advocates of it.

§. 2. The first we shall mention, is *Abgarus*, Prince of *Edeffa*, a City in *Syria*, whose Epistle to our *Lord* is still extant; the purport of which, after his *Salutation* to the Blessed Saviour of Mankind, is, *That he had heard of the miraculous Cures he had perform'd, without any Assistance either of Herbs or Medicines; that he had made the Blind to see, the Lame to walk, and cleans'd the Lepers; that he had cast out Devils; that he had heal'd those who had lain under the pressure of a lingering Illness, and that he had rais'd the Dead; that upon the Fame and Report of these things, he cou'd not but think Him to be God, and sent from Heaven, or at least the Son*

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*Son of God, who wrought such stupendous Miracles; wherefore he earnestly beseeches him to come to him, and cure him of his grievous Malady, with which he was then detain'd; that he had been inform'd of the ill treatment he met with from the Jews; and therefore requested of him that he wou'd repair to Edessa, where he shou'd meet with a different Reception. This Epistle was transcrib'd from the Ancient Monuments and Records of that City, by Eusebius, the most diligent Inquirer into Antiquity that the Church ever had, or the Heathens cou'd pretend to; Ephraem also, the Famous Deacon of this very Edessa, before the times of St. Augustin, makes an honourable mention of the said Epistle, in his Preface to his Syriack Testament, address'd to the Edessenes, Benedicta sit vestra Civitas, Blessed (says he) be the City in which ye dwell, for Edessa is the City and Mother of the Wise, which was openly blessed from the Mouth of our Lord Christ, by his Disciples and our Apostles; for when King Abgarus, who built this City, invited the Saviour of Mankind, our Lord Christ, who appear'd a stranger upon Earth, that he wou'd take up his residence with him, he said, I have heard of all the things which have been done by thee, and the many indignities which have been offer'd thee from the Reprobate and Unbelieving Jews,*  
*come*

come therefore hither, and dwell with us; for I have this small City under me, which will be sufficient for thee and me: Whose Faith our Lord admiring, sent Messengers thither, and gave an everlasting Benediction to that City, firmans ipsius fundamenta. These Authorities were thought so good by the Learned Pearson, that he did not in the least doubt of the Genuineness of this Epistle.

§. 3. Besides, it is agreed, that there are no Marks of Spuriousness, no Characters of its being false in the whole; on the other hand, that it is probable such an Epistle might be written to our Saviour, is gather'd from hence, that whilst he continu'd at Capernaum, a Maritime place, and whither Merchants and Traders resorted from all parts, healing all manner of Diseases, 'tis said his Fame was spread throughout all Syria: But Abgarus was a Prince in Syria, and wrote to our Lord, upon that very account, that he wou'd come and relieve him in a Distemper under which he labour'd.

To which our Saviour gave this remarkable Answer in writing, *Blessed art thou, Abgarus, who when thou hast not seen me, yet hast believed in me; for it is written of me, That those who have seen me, believe not in me, that those who have*  
not



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*not seen me might believe and live; whereas thou writest to me, to come to thee; I must perform those things here, for which I was sent; and then must return to Him that sent me: But after my Assumption, I will send one of my Disciples, who shall heal thee of the Distemper with which thou art so much afflicted, and shall give Life to thee and thine: Which, as the Ecclesiastical Writers assure us, was afterwards done by Thaddeus. This Epistle seems to be writ so exactly with the Spirit and in the Style of our Blessed Lord, as he is represented by the Sacred Historians, that we cannot imagine it to be counterfeited with any Pretence or Colour of Reason.*

§.4. 'Tis indeed objected, against both these *Epistles*, that the *Evangelists* are silent in the Matter, and take not the least Notice of any such Letters being writ, or any Embassy sent upon them, as is commonly said and affirm'd: But besides, that the *Gospels* are so very short and comprehensive in their accounts, that we cannot suppose they have deliver'd a hundredth part of the Transactions of those Times; for how is it possible that all the Occurrences of three or four Years, from our Saviour's beginning to appear in the World, to his Passion and Death, should be read in a few hours? Besides this, St.

*John*

*John* expressly says, That *Jesus* did many other things, which if they were particularly set down, the *World* wou'd not contain the Books that might be written.

§. 5. It is farther objected, that in our *Saviour's Epistle*, there is a place cited out of *St. John's Gospel*, which was compos'd by that Evangelist, long after our *Lord's* being upon the Earth, and his *Ascension* from it; to which it may be answer'd, that as to what respects the Expression of *That those who have not seen me might believe and live*, we may more reasonably conclude it was borrow'd, and deriv'd by the Evangelist into his *Gospel* from this *Epistle*; or at least from our *Lord* who wrote it, who frequently made use of such Sentences, than that it was transcrib'd from *that Gospel* into *this Epistle*.

§. 6. And as for its being said there, *That it was written of him, that those who had seen believ'd not in him, that those who had not seen him might believe and live*; however, some have falsely refer'd it to the Sixth Chapter of *Isaiah*, which has no manner of respect to our *Saviour*, or the expected *Messiah*, as will be easily acknowledg'd by any one who reads over that Chapter; it seems to be plain our  
Lord

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*Lord* intended the 53<sup>d</sup>, where there is a particular Description of Him, and in which are those memorable Passages, That he had no Form nor Comeliness, and when we saw him, that there was no Beauty that we shou'd desire him; that he was despis'd and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that we esteem'd him smitten, stricken of God and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruis'd for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are heal'd.

§. 7. This evidently has a relation to the *Messiah*, and at the beginning of this Chapter it is said, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord reveal'd?* or as the *Hebrew* reads it, *Gnal mi*, i. e. *Who hath believed our report, even to or before whom the Arm of the Lord is, or has been revealed?* or according to our *Saviour's* Interpretation, *those who had seen him, believed not in him.* The *Septuagint*, the *Chaldee Paraphrast*, the *Arabick* and *Syriack* Versions of this place, all translate *Mi* interrogatively, *And to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* The *Commentators*, not one excepted, likewise interpret it upon that presumption; whereas *Mi* in *Hebrew* is not only us'd interrogatively, but indefinitely



definitely and Relatively, as is evident from the 89<sup>th</sup> *Psal.* v. 47, *Remember what my time is;* and *Eccles.* 1. 9. *That which has been is the same which shall be:* as also *Psal.* 39. 6. *And he knows not who shall gather them;* and from several other Texts of Scripture, which appears to be a Confirmation of our Lord's writing this *Epistle*, who gave so just a sense of a *Prophecy*, which has been hitherto mistaken by the most Learned and Sagacious. And in this sense it is plainly connected, with that which follows, *For he has no Form nor Comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no Beauty that we shou'd desire him;* which is a good reason why those who saw him, or to whom the Arm of the Lord was revealed, shou'd not believe in him; and since this was foretold of him, it was also an Argument that those who had not seen him, might believe and live; seeing the Completion of so eminent a *Prophecy* might be a rational Conviction to them of his being the *Messiah*, describ'd in that Chapter.

§. 8. A third Objection is, That if this *Epistle* had been Genuine, it wou'd have been receiv'd into the number of the *Hagiographa* or *Sacred Writings*; the Reply to which is easy, that the *Holy Canon* was determin'd and settled long before this

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*Epistle* was drawn out from the *Archives* of *Edessa*; and farther, that ev'ry thing our *Saviour* did or said, was not necessary to be inserted into the Writings of the *Evangelists*, as is manifest from *St. John*, and therefore not every thing that was writ by him; there is a large and sufficient Account of his Miracles and Doctrine in *these* inspir'd Authors, they have transmitted to us whatever is expedient to be known, and our Duty to practise; their Books are form'd and made up, they are modell'd and compos'd of what our *Saviour* preach'd, and what he acted, and consequently it is the same as if our *Lord* had writ *himself* a History of his own Life and Miracles: 'tis true, that which came from so Divine a Hand, ought to be receiv'd and embrac'd with the highest esteem and Veneration, as this *Epistle* was in some of the first Ages of Christianity, being carry'd in Procession, and laid up amongst the Monuments of the Church, with the greatest Pomp and Solemnity.

§. 9. The last Exception against this *Epistle*, is, that in the Publick Acts and Records of *Edessa*, the time of its being sent, is plac'd in the 43<sup>d</sup> Year of our *Lord's* Incarnation, which was several Years after his Ascension, but the Excellent *Valesius* has prov'd from the most accurate Copies of

of *Eusebius*, and fixing exactly the *Era* of that City, that the 340<sup>th</sup> Year of the *Edessene* Epoche, in which this Epistle is said to be sent, do's not fall in with the 43<sup>d</sup> of our *Lord*, but with that very Year in which *Christ* suffer'd, and arose from the Dead; and in which it is most likely *Abgarus* wrote to Him, namely, after His Fame had been confirm'd, and fully establish'd by a Series of Wonders perform'd by Him; and is therefore instead of an Objection, a manifest Argument for the Genuineness of these Epistles.

If therefore these *Epistles* are true, which we have competent Arguments to think they are, and none to think they are not; what better Evidence can we demand for the Veracity of the Scriptures, and the more material passages they relate, (on which our whole Religion depends) the Miracles of our *Lord*, than this Attestation to them?

§. 10. The second Testimony we shall produce, is that of *Pilate* in his *Acts*, and the Relation he gave of what had happen'd in *Judea* to *Tiberius*; that Letter which is now extant, and go's under his Name, is to this effect, *That the Jews out of Envy had deliver'd to him, and afterwards crucify'd their Messiah, the Holy One, who was sent from GOD, who*



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had open'd the Eyes of the Blind; had cleans'd the Lepers; cur'd those who had the Palsy; cast out Devils; rais'd the Dead; made the Winds obey him; walk'd upon the Sea, and did many other things, which he had not time to enumerate: Whether or no this Letter is that which *Pilate* wrote, is not so very certain, but that he did write, and that the Emperour upon it made a Report of these things to the Senate, which they rejected, because they were not first acquainted with them, is witness'd by *Tertullian*, *Eusebius*, *Orosius*, and the earliest Writers of the Christian Church: and that there were publick Minutes taken at *Jerusalem* of what was done in relation to the condemning of our Lord by *Pilate*, *Justin Martyr* affirms in his Apology to *Antoninus Pius*.

§. 11. Nor is there any thing in this Letter, which shou'd hinder us from believing it to be that real and true Account of our Lord, and his Crucifixion, which it is evident was transmitted to *Tiberius* from *Judea*; it cannot indeed be deny'd that it is directed to *Claudius*, which is so far from being an Objection, that it seems to confirm the Genuineness of it, since *Tiberius* was call'd by that Name before he was advanc'd to the Empire; and this appears to have been written to him, as

a particular Friend, rather than as he was Emperor; seeing it is not *Claudio Cesari salutem*, but *To Claudius* only: and, it is probable, the Senate upon that account might take it amiss, that such Important Transactions were communicated to *Tiberius*, consider'd in a private capacity, when they ought to have been imparted to the *Roman* State in a more solemn and publick manner. However, if we will not allow this Letter to be that which *Pilate* writ to *Tiberius*, it is indisputable that there were certain Acts or Records of *Pilate*, which were of great Authority amongst Christians, and which therefore gave a very Advantageous Character of our *Lord* and his Actions; because we find them forg'd by Hereticks to promote their own Designs, and by those inveterate Enemies of Christianity, *Maximinus* and *Dioclesian*, to sink the Reputation of the true.

§. 12. Thirdly, *Josephus* the great Jewish Historian, is likewise an Eminent Witness to the Veracity of these Holy Writings, who says, *In this time was Jesus, a Wise Man, if it is lawful to call him a Man; for he was the Author of very wonderful things, and an Instructor of those who were ready to embrace Truth, and had several Disciples and Followers, both*

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amongst the Jews and Heathens: This  
was the CHRIST, whom, being accus'd by  
the Chief Men of our Nation, Pilate cru-  
cify'd; notwithstanding which, those who  
from the first adhered to him, did not cease  
to love and pursue him with the same ar-  
dent affection; for he appear'd unto them  
alive the third day, as the inspir'd Pro-  
phets had foretold this very thing concern-  
ing him, as well as many other Miracles  
which he wrought, and to this present day  
the Set of Christians continues, which  
have their Denomination from Him. This  
is so full and ample a Testimony, from  
a Jew, a Levite, and one who liv'd not  
many Years after our Lord's abode upon  
the Earth, in the times of the Apostles,  
and before the Destruction of Jerusalem;  
that if it is Authentick, we have all the  
Satisfaction we can desire, of the Impar-  
tiallity and Sincerity of the Holy Evan-  
gelists.*

§. 13. 'Tis said, I know, that this Pas-  
sage is not to be met with in several of  
the most Ancient Copies of *Josephus*, and  
no wonder, since the Enemies of Christia-  
nity wou'd take care to invalidate, if pos-  
sible, so Notorious an Evidence against  
them; those who took such pains to falsify  
the Acts of *Pilate*, and to rescind the  
true, who were spirited with a kind of Rage  
and



and Madneſs againſt our Holy Religion; can we think they wou'd ſuffer ſuch a Teſtimony as this to avoid their Fury? No doubt but they eras'd it out of all the Copies that came to their Hands, and omitted it in all they tranſcrib'd. But the Adverſaries of our *Faith* were very early in the perſecuting of it, and endeavour'd be- times to ſuppreſs what ever ſeem'd to fa- vour and encourage it; that it is not ſo ſtrange, if there are ſome Copies of the greateſt Antiquity, which want this At- teſtation of *Joſephus*, as it is that there are any found which have it; and inſtead of wond'ring that this paſſage of *Joſephus* is miſſing in ſome Copies, we may juſtly attribute even the preſervation of *Abgarus's* Teſtimony to a Divine Providence, which ſcreen'd it in the Monuments of *Edeſſa*, a private City, from the Perſecu- tion and Violence of the *Antichriſtian* World.

§. 14. Secondly, It is likewise urg'd, that ſome of the Antients, who were the moſt in- quiſitive and induſtrious that cou'd be, in collecting the Arguments for Chriſtia- nity, make no mention of this place in *Joſephus*; but ſince there were very early Manuſcripts in which it did not appear, it is not manifeſt that thoſe Writers might not make uſe of one of them, or at leaſt

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those who deny the Genuineness of this Passage upon such grounds, must affirm, that it was impossible for any thing to escape the Industry of the first Christian Writers, or that those who writ so much, and on such various Subjects, had also leisure to examine critically into all the Books that were ever publish'd; how easy is it for Men, of the severest Application, to overlook several things, which might fall in well enough with their Argument; can we therefore, from an Omission of that Nature, more reasonably conclude there cou'd no such thing be said or produc'd, than infer it was the Author's Fault, or his Negligence, or his Multiplicity of other Studies, that was the cause he did not produce it?

§. 15. It is farther objected against the Passage it self, That *ὁ Χριστός ἔστος ἡμεῖς* occurs in it, an Appellation, which, it is not probable, a *Jew* wou'd give to our *Saviour*, *This was the Christ*: this Exception therefore is founded upon a false Interpretation of the words; for it is not *ὁ Χριστός ἔστος ἡμεῖς*, *This was the Christ* or the real *Messiah*, but *ὁ Χριστός ἔστος ἡμεῖς*, that is, *Christ*, or He to whom his Followers, who are call'd Christians from him, have now every where affix'd that Name, was this *Person*, this *Jesus*, this *Wise Man*, this *Worker of Mi-*

*Miracles, and Instructor of those who were willing to embrace Truth.*

§. 16. Nor, by this Advantageous Description of our *Lord*, do's *Josephus* seem to mean that his Religion was true, it is only a general Character of his Integrity; for he might not so far acquiesce in the Faith, which Christianity espous'd, as to think our *Saviour* was the *Messiah*, and the Redeemer of the World; and yet might believe Him to be a more sincere and exact Teacher of the *Jewish* Doctrines than any before Him; namely, without the false Glosses of the *Scribes*, or the vain and unwarrantable Traditions of the *Pharisees*, to which Sense the Original directs us; since it do's not say he was a Teacher of the *Truth* Emphatically, but of *true things* τ'αληθῆ, which do's not suppose him infallible in all that he deliver'd, but that he was, at least, a Person who was not to be byass'd or prejudic'd in his Judgment, that his Instructions and Precepts were plain, ingenuous, and honest; and that he explain'd his Thoughts and Apprehensions of Matters, without any private Reserves or Designs.

§. 17. In this Account, *Josephus* farther adds, that *He appear'd to his Disciples on the third Day*, and that the *Prophets*



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*phets had foretold that, and many other Wonderful things of Him, which it is natural and easy for an Historian to say, who has not entirely, perhaps upon some Temporal accounts, resign'd himself up to such a Belief; if he liv'd in those Times, as our Author did, when the memory of these things were fresh, when they were in every one's Mouth, and the impressions of them were lively and warm upon Men's Minds; and which Passages of our Saviour's Life, if true, it is evident, as any Jew might very justly acknowledge, were contain'd and foretold in the inspir'd Writings of the Prophets.*

§. 18. And indeed, notwithstanding this Divine Character, which is given by *Josephus* of our *Lord*, there is such a Negligence in the other parts of it, which looks as if it came from an impartial hand; where he says, he was a *Wise Man*, it is true, and had those Principles of Integrity and Justice, that he must be confess'd to be a *good* and very *extraordinary* Person; but for any thing else, he was uncertain; this he knew, that he had *several Followers*; and that at the Time he wrote, there were a *Sect* of Men, that were call'd *Christians* from Him: this has as much of the Air and Spirit of one, who took notice of the thing, as an Historical

cal Matter only, and which he touch'd upon, as falling in with the Transactions he was then relating, without concerning himself any farther about it, as we can well suppose.

§. 19. *Lastly*, Those who are willing to think this an Interpolation, contend, that there is a perfect Connection betwixt that which go's before it, and that which follows, that this is a plain Interruption of the thread of the History, and therefore is deservedly to be rejected as false and spurious; which if at present we grant; was there never any Author who inserted an Account that was foreign to his History, into the Body of it, where the Occurrence was worthy a Remark, and of importance, and it had been a fault to omit it, and which happen'd in the time of which he was treating? If there has been such a Case, why may not that be the present? If not, it will be very unfortunate to them who deny it, that in the very next words to those, which are now contested, there is such a Case.

For the Story of *Paulina* and the Priests of *Isis*, which is immediately consequent upon the Description of our Lord, do's entirely interrupt the course of the *Jewish* Memoirs, and is only usher'd in, as having its date about the same Time. Καὶ τότε

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τοὺς αὐτὰς χρόνους, says *Josephus*, ἑτέρον τι  
 δεινὸν ἐβούλετο, τοὺς Ἰουδαίους, καὶ αὖτε τὸ ἱερὸν τῆς  
 Ἰσίδδος τὸ ἐν Ῥώμῃ πρᾶξις αἰσχυνῶν οὐκ ἀπηλ-  
 λαντῶσαι συνελθάνουσι, &c. *About the same*  
*Time*, he tells us, *there was another un-*  
*happy thing, which troubl'd and perplex'd*  
*the Jews, and most shameful and villanous*  
*Practices were discover'd at the Temple*  
*of Isis in Rome: he adds, that he shall*  
*first speak of the abominable Action of the*  
*Priests of Isis, and then return to give an*  
*account of that which was another embar-*  
*rasment of the Jewish Affairs.* Here it is  
 plain, that the matter of the Priests of  
*Isis at Rome*, was no way connected either  
 with the Sedition of the *Jews*, upon *Pi-*  
*late's* designing to make an Aquaduct;  
 which precedes the Character and De-  
 scription of our *Saviour*; or with the *Jew*  
 at *Rome*, who set up for an Interpreter  
 of the Law, and by that means cheated  
 his Profelyte *Fulvia*, a *Roman* Matron, of  
 a considerable sum of Money, under a Pre-  
 tence of sending it as an Offering to the  
*Temple*; which was what gave such a per-  
 plexity to the *Jews*, as being the occasion  
 of their Disgrace and Banishment, and  
 which follows the Story of the Priests of  
*Isis*: If therefore here is a plain Account  
 inserted, which has no other Relation to  
 the foregoing and following parts of the  
 History, than that of falling out about  
 the



the same Time; supposing there was no Connexion betwixt the Character of our Lord, and that which go's before, or succeeds it; Why has it not as just a Claim to stand in the History of *Josephus*, as a Genuine part of it, as the Account of *Paulina* and the Priests of *Isis*, when, in the present Supposition, they are equally upon the same bottom, and are introduc'd with much the same Reason, namely, their being Transactions of those Times, of which he then writ?

§. 20. 2<sup>ly</sup>, If nothing, however, will serve in a History, unless things are link'd together, by a certain kind of Connection and Dependance upon one another, which seems to be rather the property of *Argument* than *History*, we have also that at hand to justify the Truth and Genuineness of this Passage; that it is joyn'd with what go's before, is not only manifest from the *καὶ τῶν τῶν χρόνον*, about this Time, which (tho' in Annals, and the Memorials of things, it be the only Connection requisite) we shall not now insist on; it is likewise evident from the Design of this Chapter, which recounts two Seditions of the *Jews* before, and as *Josephus* had not profess'd himself a Christian, it was natural for him, when he consider'd the shocks and violent Concussions in the Jewish

*Jewish* Polity, to be carry'd in his Thoughts to that which gave it a greater disturbance, than any other Defection or Revolt in it, the Rise and Progress of *Christianity*, and which tho he could not fully approve, the Faith and Integrity of an Historian, yet led him to give a just Character of its Author, and the Important Reasons of the Sect of Christians prevailing, to the prejudice of his own Religion, and that of his Country.

§. 21. 'Tis likewise connected with that which follows in the *Jewish* History, where he says, *ἦσαν τὸς αὐτοῖς Χριστοῦ ἐν-  
εργὸν τὴν δεινὴν ἐργασίαν τὸς Ἰουδαίους*, there were some great mortifications to the *Jewish* State he had already mention'd, the Encroachments and Usurpations of *Pilate* upon their Religion and Liberties, and the Seditions consequent upon them, after that, the Proselytes *Christianity* and its great Author had made from them; and now *ἐνέργειαν τὴν δεινὴν*, another sad calamity succeeded; like one Evil upon the neck of another, the Banishment of the *Jews*, and their total Expulsion from *Rome*; so that there seems to be painted out to us a Natural, as well as Gradual Series of Afflictions falling upon the *Jews*, and so design'd and contriv'd by this Accurate Historian: *First*, An Infringement of  
their

their Liberties, and a manifest Affront and Contempt offer'd to their Religion, by Pilate; then a new Religion advanc'd in opposition to it, which seem'd to carry several Characters of Divinity in it; and after all, to compleat their Misfortune, by an unlucky Accident, and upon the account of three or four Ill-men amongst them, they were fall'n under the Displeasure of the *Emperor*, and that Power which was only able to support them, by being banish'd out of *Rome*, and sent to serve in the *Roman Armies*.

§. 21. But, *lastly*, there is still farther a Relation betwixt this Passage concerning our *Lords*, and the Account of the Priests of *Isis*, which immediately follows, for it is observable, that *Josephus* introduces the First with *καὶ τότε τῶν ἱερέων*, but the Second with *καὶ τότε αὐτῶν ἱερέων*, nothing therefore seems more reasonable than to suppose, that the Historian meant by the *same time*, or the *αὐτῶν ἱερέων*, that which he had particularly specify'd before by the *καὶ τότε τῶν ἱερέων*, and consequently that the Expression in the latter Account, is relative to, and therefore a justification of the former; let this, notwithstanding, be as it will, there is sufficient reason to think, without any such additional Proof, that this

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Passage of *Josephus* is not forg'd, but that it has all the Marks and Characters of its being as Genuine, as any other Place in the same Author.

§. 22. *Fourthly*, Our last Argument for the Veracity of the Holy Writings, is, from the pretended Miracles of *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius Tyaneus*; that they were not true ones is evident, the first from St. *Ignatius*, in his Epistle to the *Trallians*, who calls him the *First-born of Satan*, and who therefore cou'd not be suppos'd to believe him any other than an Impostor; but St. *Ignatius* was undoubtedly a good Evidence in the case, who liv'd in the same Time, and suffer'd Martyrdom in this Faith and Belief, since he dy'd for the Testimony of *Christ*, against which *Simon Magus* wrote his *Contradictorii*. As to what concerns the Miracles of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, besides the Falsity of 'em, even according to the representation of *Philostratus*, such as his raising one from the Dead, whom that Author is not certain was so; and his foretelling the Lightning falling upon *Nero's* Table, in the Consulship of *Telesinus*; which from the Testimony of *Tacitus*, fell six Years before this Famous Prediction, by which Accounts we may guess at the rest; besides this, I say, it is easy

fy to imagine the meaning of all these Fictions.

S. 23. For had our *Blessed Lord* never appear'd in the World, and wrought those Wonders, which drew such multitudes of *Jews* and *Heathens* after Him, we may rationally believe, there never wou'd have been either of these two Deceivers: *Simon Magus*, it is most demonstrable, had a particular Eye to our *Saviour*, in affirming himself to be *God* the Father in one place, in another to be *Christ*, and in a third the *Holy Ghost*; and in order to justify this Character, pretended to work Miracles; *Christianity* began now every where to be propagated, by the Force of its Evidence, and to bear down all Opposition against it. This incens'd the *Jews*, no question, and it was therefore high time for them, and the *Samaritans*, one of whom *Simon Magus* was, to joyn, if possible, in overturning it, not only by Persecutions, but by Abetting any Impostor that shou'd set up in Contradiction to the Christian Faith, and upon this account it probably is, that we find *Cerintus*, a Disciple of *Simon Magus*, so strenuously vindicating the Non-Admission of the Gentiles into the Church, against *St. Peter*, and the Circumcision of the *Jews* against *Barnabas* and *Paul*.

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§. 24. This is farther confirm'd from *Apollonius Tyanæus*; for when *Christianity* had not only shook the Foundations of *Judaism*, but was found to strike at the very Heart of the *Pagan* Worship, when the Great *DIANA* of the *Ephesians* was in danger, and the Temples of the *Heathen Deities* seem'd to be in a tottering State, and those who serv'd in them likely to lose their Employment and Gain; then it was that a Philosopher, a *Pythagorean*, was every where celebrated for a Miraculous Person, who cou'd do more than all the Predecessors in his Sect, or the Founder of it, had ever done; and the Raising the Dead, and Working other strange matters, was a thing common and easy to him: Again, whereas the Wisest Men, that went before him, in the *Pythagorick* Principles, cou'd draw nothing from 'em, unless perhaps some probable Conjectures, at the Reasons and Causes of things; he, it seems, saw and spoke of the Death of *Domitian* at *Ephesus*, at the same time that it happen'd in *Rome*; and, which is the most wonderful of all, lest he shou'd want any Qualification to make him truly prodigious, he understood the *Language of Birds*. It is indeed too manifest, from his being so highly caress'd by the Heathen Emperor, by the Consul *Telesinus*, by the parallel drawn betwixt him



him and our *Saviour*, and his being prefer'd to him by *Hierocles*, and from the other Circumstances, which are related concerning him, that all this was nothing more, than a Contrivance of the *Priests* and *Philosophers*, to oppose *Christianity*, and the Divine Author of it. For I wou'd fain ask, Supposing our *Saviour* had not been, whether ever we had heard of *Tyaneus*? And the same may be said of *Vespasian's* Miracles, and those others, which were trumpt up in that Time, namely, that they were the weak and last Efforts of *Paganism* against *Christianity*, till it had recourse to the more violent Methods of Persecution, and the most unheard of Barbarities.

§. 25. This Conclusion then we may fairly deduce from these two Impostors, That since they pretended to work the same Miracles, which our *Saviour* did, it is a Confession from them that He either did, or appear'd to work those Miracles, which they endeavour'd to copy from Him; and since these Miracles, which were *false*, have not prevail'd upon Mankind, tho' encourag'd and countenanc'd by the *Jewish* and *Heathen* World, that our *Saviour's* have, tho' asserted and maintain'd by fewer numbers, by weak and defenceless Men, by his own Disci-

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ples and Apostles only, is as great a Moral Argument as we can expect or desire that they are *true*.

§. 26. We shall therefore now finish this great and important Subject, of the Veracity of the Holy Writers, with our most devout Thanks to *Almighty God*, for giving us such a full and compleat Evidence of our *Faith* and *Religion*; and we are to adore his good Providence, even for the Enmity and Opposition that has been practis'd against it, by the worst of Men, by the Emissaries and *First-born* of *Satan*. It is not at all unlikely but in those early Times, when these *Impostors* and *Hereticks* every where infested the *Church of Christ*, that good Men might have several Doubts and Scruples upon them, about the Methods which *God* was pleas'd to make use of, in Establishing his own Worship; it wou'd seem to them very strange and unaccountable, how Dissentions from it, Persecutions of it, and apparent and open Contradictions to it, shou'd be a means of settling it upon sure and lasting Foundations; but *God's Ways* are *unsearchable* to us, who have only just a present prospect of things; those Difficulties with which they wrestled, and the Divine Intention of which they cou'd not then solve, now that they  
are

of the Christian Religion. 101

are surmounted, are powerful Arguments for our conviction, and such which can't but perpetuate the Faith in the ever Blessed *Jesus*, and our most *Holy Religion* to all ensuing Ages.

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DISCOURSE VI.

2 *Tim.* 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. CAN we with pleasure enough, for give me leave to begin this farther Discourse upon so Divine an Argument, with some sort of Extasy, *can we* with a just and becoming Satisfaction reflect upon the strong and invincible Evidence, which it has pleas'd *Almighty God* to afford us for the Veracity and Truth of the Holy Scriptures, *those Writings*, which of all others do certainly propose to us the most solid Foundations of Comfort and Joy, namely, our own Immortality, and the most Blissful one that we can imagine, upon the slender, or rather the happy Conditions of our Piety and Obedience? And *which* are so well attested to us on all hands, that no History whatsoever has the like Marks and Characters of its sincerity, comes so universally acknowledg'd by all Ages, has been transmitted down



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with so many Eyes upon it, and with  
such a Moral Impossibility of its being  
falsify'd, as the Sacred one which we de-  
fend: and if so, how truly may we say,  
if we look on the Tenour and Import of  
these Writings, that *All Scripture is given*  
*by Inspiration of God.*

§. 2. 'Tis the general Opinion indeed,  
that this refers to the Pen-men of the  
*Old Testament*, but no Reason has been  
hitherto given, why it shou'd not likewise  
respect some part of the *New*; & parti-  
cularly some, as there were several in those  
Times of the *Evangelick* Histories; espe-  
cially since this very Apostle, as *St. Ignatius*  
after him, speaking of the Sacred Ca-  
non, so *St. Paul* in like Terms, says, We  
are built upon the *Prophets* and *Apostles*;  
and that *God had given some Prophets, and*  
*some Evangelists, and Teachers, for the per-*  
*fecting of the Saints, for the Edification*  
*of the Body of Christ*; to which if we add,  
that this *Epistle* is by all confess'd, to be  
written after many others, which are re-  
ceiv'd as Canonical by the Christian  
Church, as well as three *Gospels* at least,  
and that *St. Peter*, in his *Catholick one*,  
mentions *St. Paul's*; I say, it is reasona-  
ble to think, *St. Paul* had not only a re-  
gard to the Inspirations of the *Prophets*,  
but of the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* also.

I wou'd not, however, be here mistaken; we do not, nor have not made choice of these Words, to prove from thence the Sacredness of the Holy Writings, we depend upon a *surer* and more *certain Testimony*, and as we have endeavour'd to evince the *Veracity*, we shall now proceed to evidence the *Divinity* of them.

§. 3. That the Scriptures, and the Doctrine they contain, come from God; that is, that the *Christian Religion* is no *Humane Institution*, but had its Rise from the Divine Author of All Things, is manifest on several Accounts. *First*, Because the Scriptures themselves affirm it, which we have already shewn to be true. *Secondly*, Because the *Genius and Temper* of Christianity is such, that no other but an *Infinitely good and All-wise Being* cou'd offer to us such *Great and Noble Principles*, as those which it enjoyns. *Thirdly*, Because it was propagated and confirm'd by those *Miraculous Powers*, which it was impossible for any one to have, unless by an immediate Derivation from God Himself. And *Lastly*, It is evident from that Wonderful Providence, which was observable in the surprizing Progress of the Gospel, without any *Humane Means or Assistance* that was in the least equal to the Effect which was produc'd, the

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Conversion in a manner of the whole  
World.

§. 4. And *First*, The Scriptures are very full and exprefs, in asserting the *Divinity* of that Doctrine, which they propound to our Belief. The Christian Dispensation is call'd the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and the *Kingdom of God*; *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. And in another place, *But now is the Kingdom of God come unto you*. In the 8 Chapter of *St. John* 40 Verse, *But now you seek to kill me, a Man that hath told you the Truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham*. And in the 52 Verse, *Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye wou'd love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God*. And in the 46 and 47 Verses, *If I say the Truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God's Words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God*. It wou'd be infinite to multiply all the Citations from the Scriptures, which agree in the same Affirmations; since therefore it has been prov'd, that the Scriptures are *True Memorials* of our *Blessed Lord's* Life, and the *Discipline* He instituted and preach'd; and since it is farther plain from them, that what he Taught and Publish'd to the World was from God, it is a necessary Consequence, that what they comprehend



prehend is so likewise, that the Contents and Matter of them are of *Divine Inspiration*, and owe their Original to the Sovereign Being of the Universe.

§. 5. And this we may say, abstracting from the Inspirations of the Holy Evangelists and Apostles; for tho' they shou'd be granted to write, without any particular Assistances from the Spirit of God, and shou'd be plac'd in the Rank of *Common* and *Ordinary* Historians; this wou'd not yet in the least diminish or derogate from the Sacred Authority of the Scriptures; they still wou'd maintain the Venerableness of their Character, as coming from God, tho' communicated and deliver'd to Men in a Humane way, and by the same Methods, as other Commentaries and Writings of a Civil and Temporal Composition; which we the more willingly mention, to shew, that there is nothing more requisite to convince us of the *Divinity* of the Scriptures, than the bare acknowledgment of the *Truth* of them; and those who deny the latter, must at the same time renounce the Belief of a Proposition, which as we have already evinc'd, has as many *Moral* Arguments for its certainty, as that there was ever such a State as *Athens* or *Sparta*, or such a War as the *Peloponesian*, or such an Historian as *Thucydides*.

§. 6.

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§. 6. Nor yet, if that were necessary, do we want a sufficient and ample Conviction of the Inspirations of the Blessed Penmen of these Books; St. Matthew says, in the last Charge, which our Saviour us'd to his Disciples, in which he gave it in his Instructions to them, *To teach all Nations, to observe whatsoever he had commanded them*; that he assur'd them, he would be with them to the end of the world. St. Mark tells us, that accordingly the Disciples went forth, and preach'd every where, the Lord working with them, τὸ ΚΥΕΙΝ ΟΥΡΕΥΝΕΙΝ, which must be by his Spirit, and confirming the Word with Signs following: St. Luke, that he open'd their Understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; and gave them a Promise of a Supernatural Assistance from the Father: St. John, as an earnest of this, that he breathed on them, and said unto them, *Receive the Holy Ghost*. And in the Acts we have a full and perfect account, of the wonderful Accomplishment, of what had been so punctually foretold to them; and *There appear'd unto them cloven Tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance*. St. Paul assures us, he came not behind the other Apostles, that he spake with more Tongues than

than they all; and that himself also had the Spirit of God. So that there cannot be any Scruple concerning the actual Inspirations of the Holy Apostles; the only difficulty is, what the Nature and Manner of 'em was, how far they extended, and in what Sense they ought to be apply'd to the Holy Scriptures; these are real Problems in Divinity, and deserve our greatest Caution, as well as our best Attention to explain.

§. 7. As to the Nature and Manner of these Inspirations, it is very probable they were by a *Divine afflatus*; so it seems to be describ'd in the *Acts*, and Suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it fill'd all the House where they were sitting. Nor is it at all unbecoming the Majesty of God to illuminate Mens Minds, with the excellent Truths of *Christianity*, by the same Methods, by which he first brought Light into the World, to produce a new Order and Oeconomy in the Animal Creation, by the like Measures which he took in actuating and informing the Material; For when the Earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the Deep, the Spirit, or as the Original signifies, the Wind of God mov'd upon the face of the Waters; and God said,  
Let



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*Let there be Light, and there was Light.*

§. 8. Thus we find in the 19 Chapter of the First Book of Kings, that a great and strong Wind usher'd in the presence of God, when he spake to *Elijah*, and gave him that remarkable Commission of appointing a King over his own People, as well as a Gentile one; namely, *Hazael* over *Syria*; and *Elisba* to be a Prophet in his room. It is therefore not absurd to suppose the great Embassy, on which the Apostles of our Lord were to go, and by which they were authoriz'd to make Kings and Priests unto God, both amongst *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and to institute those who shou'd succeed them in that Office, It is just to believe that such a Message, as it did not fall short of *Elijah's* in the Dignity and Importance of it; so that it wou'd be confirm'd and appropriated to them in as solemn a manner, and by much the same Divine Procedure.

§. 9. And that which still makes this the more conclusive, is, that the *Heathen Oracles*, if we may depend upon any Accounts of 'em, from *Diodorus* and *Plutarch*, were communicated to the *Pythia* in the same way; from whence it is evident, that not only those *Demons* made the Divine Inspirations the Measure and Pattern

Pattern of their own, but that Mankind has likewise thought an *Afflatus* the most Natural Medium, by which one Spirit has, as it were, an Intercourse and Correspondence with another. For besides, let us reflect on those Means, which we ourselves make use of, to explain our own Thoughts and Intentions to those Beings which are distinct from us, is it not done by a particular Direction of the *Aether*, from the Voice, or the more silent Impressions of the Hand, the Eye, or any other Motion, by which we chuse to signify our Pleasure or Designs? And may we not, or rather must we not imagine, that an Infinite and All-powerful Being can give such a certain Motion to the Air, or those minute and subtile Bodies which surrouns us, as shall infuse or inspire into us those Apprehensions of things, which he intends we shou'd have, and upon extraordinary occasions, as this was one, the Reformation of the whole World, he is determin'd we shall receive?

§. 10. This do's not seem to contradict the most Natural Notions which *Philosophy* has hitherto advanc'd, and therefore those who have a more singular respect and esteem for that *Science*, may very rationally acquiesce in the present Account which has been given; we wou'd  
not,

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not, however, be yet thought to confine the Actions of the Deity to our own Explanations, *God's ways are not as our ways*, and there may be other Methods than what finite Creatures can comprehend in his Dealings with us; let us therefore with an humble Reverence own, that as it is Matter of Fact there were Inspirations, so it is no more necessary to give a Mechanical account of 'em, in order to ascertain their being at all, than it is requisite to the Existence of a Plant or a Tree, to give the just and uncontested Laws of its Vegetation, which the best Inquirers into Nature have not yet done.

§. 11. The next thing to be examin'd into, is, the *Extent* of the Divine Inspirations, which in respect of the Persons to whom they were imparted, were certain and universal, but in respect of the Quality and Degree of 'em, limited and various; as to the Quality of these Gifts, *To one was given the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge, to another Faith, to another the Gifts of Healing, to another the Working of Miracles, to another Prophecy, to another Discerning of Spirits, to another divers kinds of Tongues, to another the Interpretation of Tongues, and all these, as the Apostle says, were wrought by the self same Spirit, dividing them to every Man*



*Man severally, as he pleas'd.* What the Nature of these particular Gifts were, we shall make it our Business to examine, when we come to give an Exposition of them; and in general we may say, that they seem to be such, as were many of them attainable, in some measure, by our own Natural Abilities, as that of *Speaking* and *Interpreting* different Languages, that of *Wisdom* and *Knowledge*, *Discerning of Spirits*, *Healing Diseases*, &c. This is evident from *St. Paul*, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, where speaking of them, he says, *But covet earnestly the best Gifts, and yet shew I to you a more excellent way:* By which it is plain, that, in some degree, it was in their own Power to determine themselves to this or that particular Acquisition.

§. 12. But as their Application to one kind of Perfection in the Christian Church, might be of service to the Attainment of it, yet that *Knowledge of Tongues*, or of *Men*, or the *Distempers* incident to them, which they could acquire by the use of their Faculties, was extremely disproportion'd to that which their Inspirations gave 'em; that is, tho' the *Primitive Christians* towards the latter end of the *Apostolical Age*, did probably make use of Means to the obtaining of those  
Ends,

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Ends, or those Endowments, which might promote Religion; yet the Effects of their Industry and Zeal, fell infinitely short of those which were produc'd from the Influence of the Divine *Afflatus*.

§. 13. And this shews the Wisdom of *Almighty God*, in his Inspirations of Men, that they were, in many cases, left to the use of their own Freedom, which he wou'd not create to be annull'd, whilst they were only assisted by a Divine Energy, so far as to make the Faculties of their Understanding more lively and vigorous, and yet subject and obedient to their Wills. As for the *Raising the Dead*, and several other Miracles, which were wrought by the First Christians; and the Primary *Effusions* of the *Holy Ghost*, they were undeniable Instances of a Supreme and Sovereign Power, and cou'd have no shadow of the least Humane concurrence in them; but afterwards it is not impossible, but there might be, which was agreeable to the wise Disposal of that *Holy Spirit*, from whence all these Gifts were deriv'd, that as those Persons which It inspir'd, were left to their own Liberty, in choosing that way in which they expected the more particular Assistances of the *Deity*; so it might appear, that these extraordinary Operations, upon the Minds of the Disciples,

sciples, were produc'd by an Almighty Energy, the same which enabled them to cast out Devils, and to raise the Dead: By which means God was pleas'd at once to demonstrate, how desirous he was of acting with us according to our Natures, and how such a Condescension, notwithstanding, was reconcileable and consistent with the Majesty and Dignity of his own.

§. 14. From this Account, it is also easy to infer the difference in Quality and Degree of the Primitive Inspirations; for otherwise, since all were wrought by the same Spirit, how shou'd it come to pass that one Christian exceeded another in the same kind of Excellencies; as *St. Paul* in the multitude of Tongues which he spake? The reason of which might, in all likelihood, depend not only on the Will and Pleasure of the Inspirer, who distributed his Spirit in what Proportion he pleas'd, or found meet and necessary for the End he propos'd, the Propagation of Religion; but likewise on the Capacity and the peculiar Genius and Faculties of the Inspir'd, and their various Applications to the acquiring those Gifts, of which they were ambitious; we yet propose this with that Distrust, and that becoming Submission, which is due in such Punctual and Critical cases as these are.

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§. 15.



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§. 15. Notwithstanding, however various and confin'd these Inspirations were in respect of their Quality, it is plain they were yet universal, in respect of the Persons, to whom they were communicated. Thus it is said in the second Chapter of the *Acts*, *And there appear'd cloven Tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of 'em, and they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost*: So in *Acts* the 10<sup>th</sup>, *While Peter yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word*; and indeed in the very first Rise and Beginnings of Christianity, when the *World* lay in Heathenism and Idolatry, the Designation of a Christian was a sort of Consecrating of him to the Sacred Employment of being a Preacher of Righteousness to it; and therefore it was requisite each single Person shou'd be endow'd with those Preternatural Aids, which might render him capable of discharging so Solemn a Function; but as the Number of Professors increas'd, and that in the Apostles Days, it is as evident that there were *Presbyters* appointed, and Men set apart, and *Ordain'd* to minister in Holy Things, amongst Christians themselves, who were to bear the same Character and Relation to Christians, which the Original Converts to Christianity had done to the Infidel and Unbelieving World; which

is abundantly manifest from the *Epistles* to *Timothy* and *Titus*, and the 9<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the first *Epistle* to the *Corinthians*.

§. 16. The *last* thing to be consider'd, is, in what sense these Inspirations are to be *apply'd* to the *Holy Scriptures*: And first, we may say, it is not necessary for us to believe that ev'ry word and syllable in them was dictated by the *Spirit* of God; for if so, every various Reading, every Omission, or Interpolation wou'd be an Exception against their Divinity: Besides, there are several Citations from the *Prophets* and the *Old Testament*; but to transcribe one Passage of Scripture, and insert it into another, do's not seem to require a Supernatural Assistance; I do not mean the Application of it to the convincing from thence the important Doctrines of Christianity; for that sometimes may, we speak only of the bare *Words* and *Syllables* which are quoted and transcrib'd.

§. 17. Farther, since *Almighty God* had already inspir'd the Evangelists and Apostles with the Knowledge of Tongues, it had been superfluous and needless to make an immediate Impression upon them of every word they shou'd write, and wou'd have contradicted and superseded the very In-

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tention of his inspiring them with that Knowledge; for to what end was it, unless that they might be capable of propagating the Christian Religion in the World, that they were endu'd with a Power of speaking or writing in different Languages? And when they were so far qualify'd for their Office, of being the Promulgers of the Gospel to all Nations, what occasion was there for any fresh or additional Inspirations of Language and Stile, to make what they preach'd intelligible to Mankind? And therefore, tho' the Primitive Christians arriv'd at that Perfection, which they had in several Tongues, by the immediate Influence of God himself; yet it is justly to be presum'd, that the peculiar Methods of attaining them, did no more hinder them from making the same arbitrary use of those which they understood, than if they had been acquir'd in the more common way of Study, and by a plain Diligence and Industry; and consequently, tho' the Language in which they writ was inspir'd, yet the particular choice of the Words and Proprieties in it, were left to the Discretion of the Writer: and from thence it is, that we find such a variety and Distinction in the Phrases and Expressions of the Holy Pen-men, according to their several Genius's and Complexions, as betwixt those of St. *Luke* and St.



St. *John*, and betwixt those of St. *Paul* and St. *James*, and the rest, which cou'd not be otherwise well accounted for.

§. 18. And as the particular *Stile*, so the *Method* of these Writings, seems to be resign'd to the Will and Pleasure, or the Natural Faculties and Powers of the Compilers of them; since nothing of this enter'd into the main Design of Religion, its general Reception by Mankind: for if Matters of Fact, and the Miracles were true, which were deliver'd in them, it was not of the least importance to recount them in the exact order in which they were done, it might be at the liberty of the Evangelist, as his own Memory or Abilities suggested, to give the World a Relation of them.

§. 19. But then this was necessary in the Inspirations of the Holy Writers, that as they shou'd be furnish'd with Language to express their Knowledge, so likewise that they shou'd not want that Knowledge which they shou'd express, both of the Essential Doctrines and Mysteries of Christianity; this Inspiration we may be assur'd they had in the highest and utmost Perfection, and those who had a Promise from our *Blessed Saviour*, that they shou'd be led into all Truth, by the Holy Spirit,

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which

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which was to guide them, cou'd not be capable of falling into the least Error, in any of the Precepts which they propounded for our Practice, or in any of the Articles of Faith, which they offer'd to our Belief; or lastly, in any of the Actions or Miracles of our Saviour, which were wrought to confirm us in the one, or induce us to the other.

S. 20. We shou'd now proceed to the second Argument for the *Divinity* of the Scriptures, namely, from the Excellent Temper and Doctrine they contain, which is above any thing Humane Reason cou'd invent; and yet when known and consider'd, the most agreeable to it, but of this in the following Discourse. Let us still, however, conclude with abundant thanks to *Almighty God* for this *Evidence*, and pray, that as *this* ought to be convincing to us, so he will please of his infinite Grace to make the succeeding *ones* effectual to that End.

Dis-

DISCOURSE VII.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. **T**HE second Argument we propos'd, to prove the *Divinity* of the Holy Scriptures from, was after the Ascertaining their *Veracity*, and the *Inspirations* consequent upon the Acknowledgment of it; the *Genius* and *Temper* of the Doctrines they advance, which tho' agreeable to Reason, yet we said were such as no Humane Faculties cou'd arrive to.

§. 2. It will perhaps be necessary to explain what I mean by that Distinction; which is only this, that as even in Natural Sciences, Men may be able to comprehend a Demonstration, which they had neither the Application nor Sagacity to find out, so in Religion, there may be those Propositions in it, whose Truth when discover'd and reveal'd, may seem plain and obvious to conceive; and yet had we been left to our selves, and to the pursuit of our own unassisted Reasonings, we might possibly have never attain'd: And if we seriously reflect upon the Precepts of the *Gospel*, we shall be oblig'd to confess very evident footsteps of a Reason superiour to any thing, which can be



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call'd Humane. That there is a great and  
Divine Sense in them, beyond what we  
can with justice suppose, Man consider'd  
in himself, was capable of suggesting to the  
World. We shall instance in two Particu-  
lars only, tho' several others might be al-  
ledg'd; the one concerns our Faith, and  
the other our Practice, and which make  
up the Sum and Essence of Christianity,  
as distinguish'd from all Religions Man-  
kind has hitherto embrac'd.

§. 3. The first, is the *Satisfaction* of  
*Christ* for the Sins of the whole World,  
in the *Redemption* of it, by his Death and  
Resurrection; and the second, that *Uni-*  
*versal* and *Disinterested Love*, even of our  
*Enemies*, which is enjoin'd us by it: Re-  
ligion always affirm'd (under different De-  
nominations indeed,) a Wise and Sove-  
reign Disposer of all things, and that this  
*Almighty Being* was infinitely just and  
good; that he had an abhorrence and ne-  
cessary detestation of every thing that was  
Evil, as contrary to the Purity and Per-  
fection of his Nature; this was easy to  
collect from the Works of the Creation,  
and the exact Order and Disposition of  
them; but here was a Difficulty to be  
solvd, which all the Wisdom of this  
World cou'd not do: it was manifest in  
Experience, that the best Men had very  
great

great Failings and Infirmities, that they were subject to the Violences or the easy Impressions of their Natures; what excellent Vertues they were endow'd with, or even their Repentance, cou'd not make amends for the Faults they committed, since it was impossible the doing a plain Duty at one time, which was requir'd from us by the Law of Nature, shou'd atone for a Duty, which we had transgress'd at another, such a Satisfaction cou'd signify no more, than in our common Concerns, the paying one Debt, wou'd be a discharge for a preceding. On the other hand, *Almighty God* had created us, and submitted us to these Conditions of our Being, and therefore it did not seem consistent with his Goodness to take a severe notice of such Crimes, which were in a great measure complexional, and yet it was unsuitable to his Justice and his Holiness, to connive at and overlook them.

§. 4. In order therefore to appease the Divine Displeasure, Sacrifices were thought of, and other voluntary Performances invented, by which it was hop'd the Deity might be made propitious to us; but alas, what cou'd all this avail? *It was not possible that the blood of Bulls and of Goats shou'd take away Sins*; we offer'd no more to Him, than what was already his own; *For all*

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*all the Beasts of the Forest were his, and the Cattle upon a thousand Hills.* Nor was there any Natural Efficacy in these sort of Oblations, to purge or cleanse us from our Guilt; our Offences against God cou'd never be expiated by any Exercises of Cruelty upon our selves, or his Creatures; this, instead of wiping off our former Debt to the Divine Justice, was the way to incur and contract a new.

§. 5. In so dark a Maze and Perplexity of things, what Human Reason, what Wit or Contrivance or Sagacity of Man cou'd find a way to extricate the World? That Religion therefore, and those Scriptures, which can give a Solution of so mighty a Difficulty, and which, when once duly consider'd, shall be in every part agreeable to the most Natural Apprehensions we have of the DEITY; we must, we cannot but confess such a System and Adjustment, to be laid out and effected by an All-wise Mind; and what else, what less than this is the Mystery of our Redemption?

§. 6. Mankind was continually offending against the Laws of its Sovereign, to have punish'd these Transgressions with necessary and unavoidable Torments, had been an Impeachment of the Divine Good-



Goodness; and to pass them by, without expressing his Resentment of them, had been an Argument of Negligence and Injustice: But in this merciful dispensation of sending his own Son into the World, to redeem us; we behold the *Almighty Being* shining in all his Majesty of Severity and Compassion, it creates such excellent and becoming Notions of him, so exalted and sublime, that as they far exceed any which Reason only could furnish us with, so they seem to carry the Native Characters of a Divine Impression in them: When we see the Blessed Son of God dying for our Sins, and the Great and Sovereign *Lord* of the Universe, condescending to make HIM a Sacrifice for us; what *ardent* Affections, what *humble* Adorations, what *extatick* Devotions do's it not inspire! How do we abhor, and with what detestation and regret do we look upon those Vices and Crimes, which were the occasion of such an undeserv'd condescension in *Almighty God*, and such an humble Patience and Submission in our *Lord*!

S. 7. Again, when *Almighty God* dealt so severely with his own Son for our Sins, what Terrors and dreadful Apprehensions do's it raise in us of offending Him! and really, if we compare that pious and reverential  
sense

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sense of a *Deity*, which a *good* and truly *considerate Christian* has, and which the *Primitive Ones* rejoyc'd in, under the greatest *Sufferings* and *Persecutions*, and upon the most deliberate and coolest consideration of things, with that which *abare Philosophy* imparts; the vast difference betwixt them, will give the one an Infinite Preference to the other, and will make us conclude, if the one is *Rational*, the other cannot be less than *Divine*.

§. 8. It is something like what we experience in Nature, this of the Author of it; where all our *abstracted Reasonings* and *Hypotheses* about it are flat, and imprint those Ideas of it in our Minds, which are lifeless and heavy, in respect of the sensible and feeling Representations made to us from an actual Contemplation of the Divine Workmanship; there is no account of Colours, or Heat, or Vegetation, or any Affection of Matter, which causes half those delightful and vigorous and noble Sensations in us, as those which are produc'd from our Perceptions of them, and from *Nature* it self, which is another kind of Revelation of the *Deity*, and is an Argument, that what proceeds from God, may be in general thought to strike us with a greater force and energy, than any thing our Reason can dictate to us; and consequently the Christian Religion, which

which gives us the most strong and pathetic Notions of this Sovereign *Being*, is deservedly to be esteem'd a Divine Revelation (as it impresses the truest and most absolute sense) of him: for what can be more agreeable, than to suppose a *Mind* indu'd with all imaginable Perfection, must be infinitely *Merciful* and *Just*? But *these* Attributes no other Religion so fully asserts as the Christian; which is manifest from plain *Matter of Fact*, since no Age or Time had the like awful Fear and Reverence of the Deity on the one hand, or on the other, entertain'd such an intense, such an ardent and affectionate Zeal for his Worship and Service, as the *Primitive* ones of the *Gospel* did; and therefore, if we cou'd prove no other way that Christianity gives us the truest Apprehensions of God, this alone wou'd be a sufficient Conviction of it.

§. 9. But as we before, so we now contend, that in *Reason* and *Speculation* likewise, the *Satisfaction* of *Christ* gives us the clearest Notions of the most Essential Properties of an All-wise and All-perfect *Being*, his *Justice* and his *Clemency*: for it is in vain for the Adversaries of Christianity, the Men of Reason, or rather the Pretenders to it, the *Socinians*, to tell us, That it was either *unjust* to make an innocent Person suffer for the guilty, or  
*absurd*



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*absurd to suppose Almighty God shou'd con-*  
*trive a Satisfaction to be made by Him-*  
*self, to his own Attributes.*

§. 10. The *First* is a Charge, that is altogether unreasonable, since whatever Sufferings our *Saviour* underwent, they were voluntarily undertaken; and where there is no violence done to the Will, there can no Injustice ensue; or if they had not been voluntary, it wou'd not have been *unjust* in God to inflict them, seeing what our *Lord* in his Humane Nature bore with Patience and Magnanimity, was infinitely rewarded, by its being united to the Godhead, and the weight of those Afflictions he felt for the Sins of Mankind, was light and inconsiderable, compar'd with that wonderful and transcendent Glory, to which he was adopted; or lastly, had neither his Sufferings been *voluntary*, nor yet *rewarded* if inflicted, there still had been no injustice in *Almighty God*, to demand any Penalties he was pleas'd to lay upon that Humane Nature, which he had assum'd into his own; 'tis true, for one being to do a Violence or Injury to another, is contrary to the Laws of Equity and Reason; but when we consider the Humane Nature of our *Lord*, as joyn'd and united to the Deity, what Pretence can the Adversaries of *Christianity* have to  
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prohibit *Almighty God* from acting as arbitrarily and freely, in the Punishment or Affliction of it, which will not debar us from the Freedom of Will, and using any Part or Member which belongs to us at our own pleasure? If the *Socinians* affirm, this is all solv'd upon the *Hypothesis* of an Union of our *Blessed Saviour* with the Godhead; we answer, That if they say, *to make an innocent Person suffer is unjust*, which is so upon *their* Supposition, and we prove it is not so upon *ours*, we shou'd hope it might be an Argument to them to disclaim what they have so falsely espous'd, or at least not to press us with Difficulties, which depend upon Principles we disown, and are properly of their assuming, and for which therefore they, not we, are accountable.

§. 11. And this leads us to the *Second Objection*, that it seems *inconvenient* and *disagreeable* to assert, That *Almighty God* shou'd make a Satisfaction to, and from Himself, for the Offences committed against his own Laws; in order to give a Solution of this Difficulty, we must take the same Method as before, to shew this is no ways inconsistent with the *Christian Faith*, if it is with the *Socinian*, they are to answer for Objections they raise against themselves; for, as we apprehend  
it,

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it, we are not oblig'd to reconcile them with a Doctrine we *cannot* own: It will be therefore just to enquire and know, what is meant by making a Satisfaction *to*, and *from* Himself: Is Humane Nature the Godhead? do's not all Mankind own the difference? do's it not acknowledge an infinite disproportion betwixt the one and the other? how then, (for let us be certain) how do's the *Deity* assuming *Humane Nature* to make satisfaction to the *Deity*, infer, that the *Deity* without such an Assumption makes a satisfaction to it self; but if the Assumption of Humane Nature was necessary and essential to this satisfaction, and Humane Nature is not the Godhead; the satisfaction which was made to the *Divine* Nature by, and from the *Humane* was not made by, and from the *Divine* to its *own*.

§. 12. 'Tis true, *Almighty God* prepar'd this Humane Nature of *Christ*, and gave and united it to his *Son*, which was only an Act of his own Sovereignty, as He was Lord, and Creator, and Governour of his Creatures, and if the Adversaries of our Religion will refuse the Exercise of such a Power to the Wise-disposer of all things, they may with an equal Modesty, as they strike at his Authority, and the high Prerogative He has over us, dethrone Him



Him likewise from his very Being; and, as we before said, deny us a Freedom and Liberty of acting according to our own Wills.

§. 13. And now, where lies the Absurdity? The best and most innocent Men had offended against God, as our First Parents had formerly done in Paradise, the eternal Punishment of any of these, cou'd have only satisfy'd for their own Transgressions against the Divine Law; and if it had not been contrary to the *Justice*, it wou'd scarcely have been reconcileable with the Infinite *Mercy* and *Love* of our Creator. Had the Angels, or any of those spotless Beings which are above us suffered, it wou'd have been unjust, nor wou'd the same Nature have undergone the Punishment which had committed the Crime. Amidst these hard and miserable Circumstances of Mankind, was contriv'd the Great and Wonderful Mystery of our Redemption, by the Union of our Nature with the Divine, the punishment of which was *just*, because it was advanc'd to that surprizing and astonishing State and Dignity, which it had not otherwise merited, in Compensation for the Mighty and Unspeakable Sufferings it endur'd, it was *sufficient*, because it consisted in the Humiliation and Death of one, who was exalted

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in Honour and Greatness infinitely above  
all the Sons of *Adam*, and therefore by  
that near Relation which it had to the  
Deity, equal to the whole collective Mass  
of Humane Nature, it was *proper* and *ad-*  
*apted* to the Offence, because we being  
the Criminals, that Person who was equi-  
valent to us, bore the Iniquities of us all,  
and pay'd the full Price of them: It was  
lastly a *Merciful* and *Gracious* Dispen-  
sation, in our being deliver'd from the Ven-  
geance due to our Transgressions and Sins.

§. 14. This Account *Christianity* gives  
us of those Divine Attributes, the *Justice*  
and *Love* of GOD to Mankind; and if  
any Exceptions can be made against it, (as  
there is no Truth so evident, which some  
Men will not dispute) we dare at least af-  
firm, that *Natural Religion* never pro-  
pos'd so consistent a Scheme for reconcil-  
ing the one with the other, as the pre-  
sent we have mention'd; it wou'd be te-  
dious to set all the Arguments on both  
hands in one View, we have only there-  
fore in short endeavour'd to shew how  
deficient *Humane Reason* was in solving  
this Difficulty, and how clearly *Revela-*  
*tion* do's.

§. 15. Notwithstanding, lest we shou'd  
be intangled and perplex'd in our Reason-  
ings,

ings, which in such reserv'd and abstruse Speculations too often happens, it has pleas'd G O D to give us Matter of Fact for our Conviction; for let us argue, and be as lavish of our Subtleties and Distinctions as we are willing to be, this yet, as we have already observ'd, we cannot with any Justice disown; that the Primitive Christians, of all that have succeeded them, had the truest Sentiments of the *Justice* and *Love* of G O D to them, as is evident from those Principles which guided their Lives and Actions; their extraordinary and affectionate *Zeal* and *Devotion* to Almighty God, and their *Fear* of offending him, which diffus'd it self also into their extreme Love, and that exact Piety and Justice they practic'd to one another; from whence it is plain, that the Redemption of Mankind, which the Holy Writers so often mention, gave them at least very strong Impressions of a Just and most Gracious Being: Let us once therefore see the same Noble and Primitive Spirit reviv'd, amongst the *Modern Reasoners* in *Christianity*, and it may go far to make us believe, that as they seem to be very solicitous about the *Attributes* of God, in their Arguments concerning them, so they really have as true and as just a Sense of them.



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§. 16. But if the *Christian* Doctrine affords us the most *Rational* Contemplation of the *Divine Attributes*, and the Foundation of that Reason is the *Union*, or *Assumption* of *Humane Nature* to the *Godhead*, we appeal to the Sense of Mankind, when we ask, Whether all the Great Genius's that ever appear'd in the World, had they bent their Studies and Applications this way, cou'd have imagin'd, or cou'd presume to think of *such* an Expedient, *so* miraculous and amazing? And yet when found out, how do's every thing seem to come forth, and display it self in a Natural Beauty and Order! a perfect Harmony and Concord cements the Divine Attributes of *Justice* and *Love*, and we are suitably transported with the most awful Reverence, and the most humble and devout Adorations: This, therefore, is the first Instance of the *Divinity* of the Scriptures, that they propose to us a Doctrine which is superiour to any *Humane Reason*, and yet agreeable to it, and consequently must owe its Original to a *Divine*.

§. 17. The *second* Instance respects our Practice, and is that *Universal* and *Disinterested Love* even of our *Enemies*, which Christianity enjoyns us; *Natural Religion*, it is true, furnishes us with many very excellent

cellent Precepts, for our Regular Behaviour and Deportment, as those of Justice and Sobriety, of Temperance and Chastity, of Fortitude and presence of Mind, under any Affliction or Calamities which shall befall us; all which, tho' they are really to be esteem'd and valu'd as the Dictates of a *Rational* Nature, yet seem to carry a sort of Interest and Selfishness in them; both as they contribute to our Health and Ease, and as they are punctual and just Decencies of Life, which procure to us a due Regard and Observance from others.

§. 18. But the Vertues of *Christianity* and *Religion* are of another strain, and are deriv'd from the *Passion* and *Sufferings* of our *Lord* for our Sins; that as our *Faith* is distinguish'd from that of other Religions, so the *Morals* and *Discipline* of it might be so too: CHRIST humbled Himself, and became obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross; that he might reconcile us to God, whilst we were yet sinners; and he has given us a New Commandment, that as He lov'd Us, We also shou'd love one another: From whence it is apparent, that our Christian Profession was to be the Foundation of our Christian Practice; and the Vertues we shou'd be oblig'd more particularly to pursue, were to be consonant to those our dying Saviour propos'd to our

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imitation, which were, in the first place, an universal Love to Mankind, not excepting even those which had offended us in the highest manner, which were enemies to us, and contemnners of our Faith and Religion; and to this by a certain kind of Connexion, as well as from their being more especially conspicuous, in that wonderful Act of our Redemption, were joyn'd the utmost Condescension and Humility, the greatest Meekness and Gentleness, the most entire Patience and Submission, and the most compassionate Zeal and Concern for all others, with an absolute Contempt and Disregard of our selves; this seems to be the very Essence and Spirit of our Holy Religion, as it was the Example and Practice of the Divine Author of it, in relation to our reciprocal Duties amongst one another.

§. 19. Let us now be inform'd, what *Human Reason* cou'd have ever furnish'd us with such Principles of Generosity and Kindness? *Self-defence*, or a Provision for our selves, is the eldest Law of Nature; this Doctrine yet teaches us something greater than *that*, and commands us to prefer the Interests of others, before our own; and instead of reckoning our selves the first, to place our selves the last in the Creation; to be humble and to self-deny, and at  
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the same time to procure all the Happiness and Satisfaction to others that can possibly lye in our power, every Man's particular Temper and Complexion wou'd be too indulgent to it self, to advance such a Reasoning as this; we do not find any of the most rational *Heathens* before the Times of our Blessed Lord, to have entertain'd the least Notion of such a System of Morality; and those, I mean the *Socinians* and *Deists*, who tread in the same delicate paths of their own Sense and Wisdom, have not out-gone them.

§. 20. If yet the World wou'd conform to these *Sacred* Injunctions of our *Religion*, what cou'd be more conducive to the *Happiness*, and more perfective of the *Reason* of Mankind? For by this means all the Miseries, unless those which our Natures and Constitutions bring upon us, all the *voluntary* Miseries which are induc'd amongst Men, wou'd be effectually cashier'd, and the Reproaches which ly upon our Understandings or Wills, wou'd find a Remedy in our Candour and good Nature: Poverty and Ignominy also, or Want and Meanness, are the other great Afflictions of Humane Society, which of our own accords we introduce into it; none of the Vertues of Natural Religion can give us

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a Cure for these Evils: Sobriety, Temperance, Chastity, Fortitude, and the like, only or chiefly respect our selves; Justice may secure us in our present circumstances, but cannot relieve them; on the other hand, the *Divine Love* and *Manifcence* which the Gospel inculcates to us, the preferring others to our selves, *the doing good to those that hate us, and praying for those that despitefully use us*, wou'd give those, who are rich in this World, the advantage of making others so in preference to themselves, and those who are in the highest Stations, the Noble and Exalted Pleasure of Condescension, by which means Poverty and Disgrace wou'd be banish'd out of the World. Thus our *Blessed Lord* did, who, *When he was rich, he became poor*, and when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal to him, took upon him the form of a servant.

§. 21: Nor wou'd this Practice be more conducing to our *Happiness*, than it wou'd be a Commendation of our *Reason*; for what is the Foundation of all Rational Virtues, unless that they promote our real Interest and good, which this do's in a very singular manner: Besides which, were that Christian Humility, that Meekness and Submission, which the Scriptures require of us universally embrac'd, we shou'd

shou'd endeavour to palliate the Vices and Faults, the Mistakes and Errors of our more enormous or our weaker Brethren, which wou'd make our Natures appear less irregular, and our reasonable Faculties more amiable and beautiful, and more becoming the Great and Wise Author of 'em. How happy wou'd this Temper make us, how affectionate, how kind and obliging to each other, this which our Religion propounds to us! Covetousness and a selfish Temper, *that root of all evil*, Ambition, Pride, Malice, Revenge, all the ill Properties and Affections of our Natures, wou'd be lost and vanish by the prevalence of so Blessed a Principle; this Earth wou'd be chang'd into the delightful Seats of Happy Spirits, and nothing but Immortality wou'd be wanting to make a *Heaven* here. All the Invention and Sagacity of Man cou'd never have found out so Noble and Divine a Scheme, by which all Humane Actions might be guided and adjusted, as that which naturally results from the *Death* and *Passion* of our LORD, from the *Crucifixion* of the SON of GOD, for the Sins of the whole World; for such an Example of Infinite Love and Humility, of an unparallel'd Generosity and Goodness, must needs infuse such a Spirit into the Christian Religion, and inflame the  
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Professors of it with such fervent and undissembled Affections, such pious and rapturous Thoughts, such an absolute Contempt of this World, as the wisest and best *Philosophers* cou'd never rise to, with the strictest and the most elevated use of their Reason. And this is the second Argument for the Divinity of the Scriptures, as they offer to us a Systeme of Morality, distinct from, and superiour to any thing that was ever before known to us, which is highly agreeable to our Reason, and yet above it.

§. 22. If therefore we now compare these two Arguments together, which we have separately consider'd, it will be a farther Demonstration to us of the Divinity of the Holy Writings; since we cannot but acknowledge it to be worthy of the *Infinite Mind*, to calculate and concert the Method of our *Redemption* in such wise, that it shou'd at the same time give us true and regular Apprehensions of his Justice and Goodness, and inspire us with better Rules and Standards of our Actions, than any *Reason* or *Philosophy* had propos'd, or cou'd propose to us; that our Devotion to *Almighty God*, and our Piety to one another might take like steps, and make equal advances to their utmost and last perfection; all which is done by the  
*Union*

of the Christian Religion. 139

*Union of Humane Nature with the God-head in our LORD, and his voluntary submitting with all Lowliness, and Patience to the Death of a Malefactor, for the Sins of Mankind: so just was it that such a Religion as this shou'd be usher'd into the World, with that Holy and Angelick Anthem, Glory be to God on high, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men: for surely we may say, the Worship and Homage of the Divine Being was never so pathetically taught, nor the good and kind Offices to one another so strongly enforc'd, nor could be from any Reason, or from any Religion, as the Christian.*

§. 23. Let us then take care of falling into that Error, which is too generally propagated amongst us, and which I mention'd in the beginning of these Discourses, namely, That the *Morality* of the Christian Doctrines, is a proof of the *Divinity* of our *Lord's* Miracles; and they consequently of the Truth of our Religion: No! there is no reason to have recourse to such Arguments, which if they are not circular, yet, as we before prov'd, are inconclusive. The *Veracity* of the Scriptures has been already demonstrated; and if they are *true*, they are likewise *Divine*, the Doctrines they contain are not as the *Patrons* of *Reason* wou'd make us imagine, good whole-

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wholesome Institutions only, for our Conduct and Acting, for our Worship of the Deity, and paying that Natural Homage, which is due to Him; but are in themselves sublime and great *above* the highest stretch of our Faculties to find out, and yet when found out, *extremely adapted* to them, and therefore owe their Original to a Divine Information. Here then we shall rest, till we come to evidence the same Truth from a distinct and independent Argument, the *Miracles* wrought in confirmation of the *Scriptures*, by our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, which we shall do in our following Discourse.

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DISCOURSE VIII.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. I. **F**ROM the *Doctrines* which the *Scriptures* affirm, we shall proceed to the *Miracles* wrought in justification of them; by which it will evidently appear, that their Authority is unquestionably *Divine*. In treating upon this Subject, there is one thing only necessary to be consider'd, namely, what the true Account and Notion of Miracles is, and whether there are any which do not come  
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originally, and by immediate Derivation, from God Himself.

§. 2. In answer to which, it is plain, that *that* cannot, with the least propriety of Speech, be call'd a Miracle; *which* it is within the reach and verge of Humane power to effect, and therefore, tho' several things have been with great Artifice contriv'd, to impose upon the Credulity of Men, which seem very admirable and surprizing, none of these will fall under that Denomination. Thus an Image, as amongst the *Romanists*, may be so adjusted, by a particular Mechanism or movement of the parts, as to shed Tears, to sweat Blood, or the like; but this is no more than what may be done by a common Art or Skill.

§. 3. All the Question that can ly here therefore, is, how far it is possible for Humane Abilities to extend, and whether they cannot arrive at several things which are suppos'd Miraculous; since it is plain, they produce to us those which are very strange, of which we can give no account, and which in general may seem as stupendous and as impracticable, as any thing else we can imagine: Numerous Examples of this might be had, both from the *Mathematicks* and *Philosophy*.

§. 4.

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§.4. We may therefore in the present case affirm, that tho' we cannot be so certain in drawing the exact lines, and fixing the just limits betwixt the Force of Humane Policy and Invention, and what is superior to it; yet we may easily know what is manifestly and palpably above it; so for instance, tho' it will be hard and difficult for us to pronounce decisively what are the real Boundaries of Vertue and Vice; that is, where the one ends, and the other begins; yet this, notwithstanding, is obvious, that evident and plain Vertues are not the contrary Vices. And it is the same in the present Circumstance, we do not fully know, in some respects, the utmost pitch of our Faculties, how far they may go in finding out in Theory or Practice, what is at present undiscover'd, and appears unsurmountable to us; we may be however assur'd of this, that there are several Instances in which the best Abilities we can make use of can never serve us, since all our Sagacity and Parts cannot *cure* a Distemper, by a *word* or a *shadow*, or *raise* the *Dead* when they are in their Graves, without any more than the voice of *bidding them come forth*; Men cou'd never by any Art imaginable inspire an immediate *Knowledge* of *Languages*, or impart a Power to others of *healing* all manner of *Diseases*, by a bare commission only, or change

change the Nature or Essence of any thing into the contrary, and turn *Water* into *Wine*: These are Attributes which do not belong to Humane Nature, and whatever large Concessions we make to it, are infinitely above it; and we cannot therefore, with the least pretence of Reason, suppose that Men were capable of working the Miracles, which the Gospels assert, and which are those we defend, but if we may justly conclude, that what Christians properly call *Miracles*, are superior to any *Human Power*, much more are they so to any *stated* or *fix'd* Laws of *Nature*.

§. 5. The next Enquiry is, Whether these *Miracles* could be wrought or produc'd by any other Beings distinct from us, either *good* or *bad* Angels, without the Intervention of the Supreme Disposer of all things, and his particular Approbation and Concurrence, which we shall endeavour to evidence they could not be, and upon this plain Account, because Almighty God in his Intercourses with Men would not, (nor is it rational to think that He would;) *He would not* allow without His own Commission and Designment, that any Beings above us shou'd act under his Name what he did not absolutely approve, as they would, if they were permitted the liberty and power of Miracles,

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to propagate a false persuasion in the World: We have already shewn, that tho' it is not easy for us to determine what is exactly plac'd within the extent of our own Faculties, or those of Nature, yet it is not hard to know what is extreamly above them, if therefore in what is above them, it was in the power of Beings superiour to us, to concern themselves in Humane Affairs, unless for good ends and purposes, which Almighty God foresaw, and was desirous and provident of their Being effected, it wou'd be consequent that we shou'd be abus'd into a Belief of Doctrines and Works proceeding from God, which really did not, without any possibility of avoiding it. But if we acknowledge a Sovereign Being, that is infinitely kind and beneficent to his Creatures, as Natural Religion do's, and at the same time confess that there were Miracles in the Christian beyond the force of Humane or dead Nature to perform, which is certain from the Evangelick Histories, whose Authority we have no reason to dispute; it is a Demonstration that Christianity, as it is contain'd in the Scriptures is of a Divine Original, and that no other but Almighty God is the Author of it.

§. 6. This therefore which we have propos'd in gross, will lead us to enlarge on the two following Particulars, namely,

*First*, That God do's not permit either good or evil Angels to interpose in Humane Affairs, by working of Miracles, properly so call'd, without his immediate Commission and Instructions, and by consequence, where any thing is perform'd in a Miraculous manner, above the settled Rules of Nature, or our own actings; that is, where an Effect is produc'd, which is apparently disproportion'd to the Cause, we may reasonably conclude, it is done by the particular Finger and Direction of God, and by a manifest appointment and designation of the Divine Will.

*Secondly*, That if so, it is of no Importance to us to know (which has been a late Contest amongst Divines). Whether Evil Spirits can naturally work Miracles, or not? since upon the supposition that they can, the Truth of our Religion will be fully asserted; and if they cannot, it is then plain, they are the Efforts and Actions of the *Supreme Mind*.

§. 7. In speaking to the *First*, it will not be amiss to distinguish *Miracles* into two sorts, both which are equally above any powers of Nature, or any Humane force to accomplish; that is to say, first those

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which are superior to our own Abilities, and yet do not necessarily conclude them to be wrought by any other Beings, than such as exceed us in some definite Measures of Sagacity and Strength; thus to remove Mountains, to make Iron swim, without any apparent support of it, is beyond our Faculties and Skill; tho' at the same time, in the real Constitution of Natural Beings, it is no way certain, because it is not impossible, but there are Spirits more strong and active than we are, who may produce these, or such like Effects: But then, what is the Design of them? not to propagate any new Religion, they are only to shew us the Extent of the Creation, that there are Spiritual Substances distinct from us, and another World besides our own; and therefore such Occurrences are admirable and strange, and upon that account may be call'd *Miracles*; yet in the strict sense of them, they will not admit of so Sacred a Character; and if any of them are made use of, to advance or confirm a Religion to Mankind, we cannot but be assur'd, they are Authoriz'd by an Almighty Being; if not, that they are only the Effect of a Superior Nature to ours, without any other Conclusion that can be drawn from them.



§. 8. The *Second* sort of Miracles are those which Christianity proposes; and may be properly and particularly term'd such; as the *Raising* the Dead, the *Changing* one Essence into another, as *Water* into *Wine*, the *Healing* all kinds of Diseases, apart from any external applications, and the *Inspiration* of Tongues, these all concern the Nature and Being of things, which Almighty God wou'd not leave to the Caprice and Humour of subordinate Spirits to alter and diversify at pleasure, and by that means to break in upon the Establish'd and Fundamental Laws of the Creation: His Prerogative, we may justly imagine, is too tender a Point with Him (who is *jealous* of his Honour, and is cautious how He *gives it to another*) to suffer it to be infring'd by any, tho' the highest and most exalted of his Creatures; as it wou'd seem to be, if either good or evil Spirits had the power of rescinding or annulling any of those fix'd Rules of existing, which were in the first Formation of all things prescrib'd to Nature, and by which it was to be afterwards govern'd and directed. This wou'd be to commit the Empire of the Universe to Spirits independent of Almighty God, and therefore 'tis absurd to suppose it.

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§. 9. Besides, there is no Religion which do's not acknowledge this World was made and constituted by God Himself, or by an immediate Deputation from Him; and the Creation of the World, as well as the Government of it, has been always esteem'd by the Wisest Men, to appertain to the *Deity*; but to change the Essences of things, to make the Fire *not burn*, as in *Moses's Bush*, which amidst the flame was unconsum'd; to make a dead Person live; to cause that the Blind shou'd see, and the Lame shou'd walk; by a Voice only, to produce a Knowledge of Languages out of an Ignorance of 'em; and the strength of Wine out of the weakness of Water, by a Word or a Sign, are manifest Instances of a *Creating*, and consequently of an *Almighty* and *Superintending* Power.

§. 10. Farther, supposing it did not contradict two of the Attributes of God, consider'd as He is Creator and Governor of the World, that Spirits shou'd work those Miracles which the Scriptures recount to us, it wou'd notwithstanding be inconsistent with His Goodness and Veracity, to allow those Creatures, which are above us, to interest themselves in Humane Affairs, so as to have the Liberty of promoting an Imposture by such  
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strange and miraculous Performances, as we have no way of distinguishing from those which carry the most evident tokens of Divinity in them; and therefore, if Angels or Evil Spirits wrought the Miracles of Christianity, if we cou'd imagine or believe such a thing, yet since we cannot with any reason think, that Almighty God wou'd permit them to insult the Natural and necessary Weakness of our Faculties and Understandings, from that Advantage they have over us; it wou'd not from thence follow, but that our Religion was from God, and that it was appointed and determin'd by Him, that we shou'd receive and embrace it as his own.

§. 11. 'Tis objected indeed from Matter of Fact, that Evil Spirits may of themselves work Miracles, as the *Magicians of Egypt* by their Assistance did, in opposition to *Moses*, the *Heathen Oracles* in prejudice to the true Worship of One God, and *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius*, in contradiction to *Christianity*; and therefore we cannot depend upon Miracles only for the Confirmation of our Religion, without some respect had to the Doctrines they assert.

§. 12. If granting therefore this Conclusion is just, yet since we have prov'd the



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Doctrines of Christianity independant from Miracles, *to be deriv'd* from a Divine Original, and that they are not only bare Moral Rules for our Conduct, it wou'd likewise follow, that those Miracles we defend *are so too*, seeing they were wrought in Confirmation of such Doctrines, which have evident Characters of Divinity in them: But intending to make a distinct Argument for the *Divinity* of the *Scriptures* and our Religion, from their *External* Evidence, namely, Miracles separate and apart from the *Internal*, that is, the real and intrinick Matter and Doctrines they comprehend, we shall consider whether what is objected imports any Force against what has been already props'd on this Head.

§. 13. As to the *Egyptian Magi*, it is certain by their Inchantments they perform'd several Miracles, which were wrought by *Moses*, it is notwithstanding as evident, that they were inferiour to him in diverse respects: *First*, in his having the Superiority over them in the *same* Miracles, which were joyntly perform'd by both; for *they cast down every man his rod, and they became Serpents, but Aaron's Rod swallow'd up theirs, Exod. 7. 12.* and in their *other* Miracles we likewise find, that whatever the *Magicians* did,

did, it was only in the power of *Moses* and *Aaron* to annul. Secondly, In performing those Miracles, which the *Magicians* could not; thus *Exod. 9. 18.* And the *Magicians* did so with their *Inchantments* to bring forth *Lice*, but they could not. Thirdly, In inflicting those plagues, which the *Magicians themselves* could not avoid; as in *Exod. 9. 11.* And the *Magicians* could not stand before *Moses*, because of the *Boils*, for the *Boil* was upon the *Magicians*, and upon all the *Egyptians*; so that this is so far from being an Argument against any thing we have said, that it is a Confirmation of it.

§. 14. Had the *Magicians* perform'd equal Miracles, or superiour to those of *Moses*, we had been uncertain from Fact, (tho' our Reason would have recoil'd) whether Almighty God had not given Evil Spirits a power to impose upon Mankind; but where they could only work some certain Miracles, and could not do others, which in the Nature of 'em had nothing more difficult than those they wrought; what Inference can we draw from such an Account, unless that Almighty God set very Arbitrary Bounds to their Power, and that they did nothing without His *Approbation* as well as *Permission*, that He was willing to shew not only His Absolute

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Dominion and Prerogative over the Visible Creation, but over those Spiritual Beings, which were in a much higher Class than our selves, and which He commanded with as supreme a Sway, as the rest of His Creatures; that He was determin'd from *this Instance* to give all succeeding Ages an assurance, that whatever Apprehensions they might have of being deluded by those Beings which were above them, notwithstanding all their Caution, they might have an Assurance from *thence*, that he wou'd not suffer them to be cheated by any real Miracles from Evil Spirits, into a Religion He did not design them. These seem to be the Natural Consequences deducible from those Miracles, which were perform'd by the *Egyptian Magi*; and therefore, as we said, are so evidently *not* a proof that Evil Spirits can work Miracles, without a Delegated Power from GOD, in confirmation of any Religion, that they evince the contrary, *viz.* that they cannot do it, without such a Divine Power and Commission.

§. 15. The *Second* Objection is founded upon I know not what *Miracles*, or *Predictions* at least, which are reported and handed down to us, concerning the Heathen Oracles: But the Obscurity and Ambiguity of the *latter*, and the Uncertainty of



of the *former*, make it rather credible, that they were the Artifices or Contrivances of the Priests, to bring a Reputation to the Shrines of their Deities, than that they are Instances of Fact, which deserve an Answer; and we may more reasonably think, that Almighty God was pleas'd to send a *Lying Spirit into the mouths of their Prophets*, than believe that He endu'd them with any *such Power or Knowledge*, as is pretended.

§. 16. If this is not a sufficient Reply, and it shall be still urg'd, that those Miracles are real; we say yet, that in comparison with the *Christian*, they were far short of them, as those of the *Magicians* were, in respect of the Miracles wrought by *Moses*; and therefore when they are consider'd together and compar'd, there may be the same Inferences drawn from them, as are express'd in §. 14. and that in the interval, till they cou'd be compar'd, for wise and good Reasons, God thought fit to *wink at the times of Ignorance*, as the Apostle tells us.

§. 17. *Lastly*, Till these Miracles are produc'd, which are presum'd to have been wrought by the Heathen Deities, it is not evident that they do not fall under that fort, which the *Romanists* at present lay claim

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claim to; as the Weeping or Sweating of Images, (for we have likewise accounts of that Nature from the *Heathens*) and which we have said may be done by an Artificial Mechanism and Contrivance, or else, that they may not be resolv'd into what we may easily imagine Beings superiour to our selves are capable of, and which can only rationally give us these Impressions, that there are Spiritual Substances distinct from us, and which kind of Miracles or Actions Almighty God might justly permit, to convince us of it. Notwithstanding which, we cannot but be apt to conclude, that most of the *Heathen* Miracles were forg'd and impos'd upon the World, out of particular Aims and Designs; since those of *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius*, which is the third Objection we are to consider, most evidently were, tho' they have a greater Reputation for their Truth, than any others that the *Heathens* can boast of.

§. 18. The Intention of these two Impostors we have already explain'd, by whom they were set up, in opposition to our Religion, and their vain pretences to rival its Miracles; we shall therefore only add in respect of the *First*, that according to the History which the *Acts* of the *Holy Apostles* gives us of him, he  
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was so far convinc'd of the Truth of the Christian Miracles, and the Falshood of his own, that he believ'd and was baptiz'd, and wonder'd, beholding the Miracles and Signs which were done, that when he saw that thro' laying on of the Apostles hands, the Holy Ghost was given, he offer'd them money, saying, Give me also this Power, that on whomsoever I lay Hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost; Acts 8. 13. 18, 19. From which passage, it is easy to collect, that he was conscious to himself of his own Impostures, and that they would not bear the Test of true Miracles, when compar'd with those of the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord. He is also said to have bewitch'd the People of Samaria with his Sorceries, ἐξουθενῶν αὐτούς, that is, he had put them besides themselves, and amus'd and deceiv'd them out of their Senses by his Magick and Collusions.

§. 19. As to what concerns *Apollonius*, besides what has been alledg'd against the notorious Falshity, as well as Impossibility, of what the Writer of his Life relates of him, that History was writ 100 Years after *Apollonius's* Time, from the Commentaries, or rather Fictions, of one *Dares*, an obscure and unknown Author, to oblige an *Empress*, whose Inclinations led her to admire any Romance, by *Philostratus*,



*Iosratus*, who would be glad of an Opportunity to gratify so Powerful a Princess; and all this was probably done, not without the Instigation of the *Heathen Priests*, who found their Religion in danger, and just upon the Article of expiring; and is such an Authority as this to be regarded? what Opinions or Notions can we entertain of it, but such as must make us, if not abominate, yet despise and scorn it?

§. 20. All that can be farther said in this Case, is, that it is plain, it has pleas'd Almighty God to permit Men to be misguided in Matters of Religion, that the *Heathens*, that the followers of *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius* were; and so it is evident it must be for the same Reason, that one Person may deceive another in the common occurrences of Life. This, however, is no *Impeachment* of the *Divine Veracity*; because he leaves every Man to judge for himself, and if he is impos'd upon by these Miracles, which it is in the power of superior Spirits to perform, or by those which Humane Abilities may arrive to, he is only to thank his own Rashness in believing, and if Men have been deluded by these Impostures, they only are blameable for it; but on the other hand, if the Miracles which Christianity proposes, are true,

true, in the Accounts we have of 'em, as has been prov'd; if they are not likewise Divine, and deriv'd immediately from God, our Error is invincible; because we cannot guard against an Evidence, which is above any Humane power to give us, and has not been known in Fact, and cannot in Reason reside in any Created Being, without a particular Commission and Delegation from God. And this indeed wou'd be an *Impeachment of the Divine Veracity*.

§. 21. We shall therefore now in the *last* place observe, as we design'd; that whether Good or Evil Spirits can work true Miracles or not, it is not material, since if they *cannot*, and true Miracles are wrought, it is very necessary for us to acknowledge they must be from God; if they *can*, yet since we have endeavour'd to shew it is no otherwise than by His Concurrence and Designation, by his own Order and Appointment, we may as fully depend upon what is meant and intended by them, as if Almighty God Himself was the Immediate Author of them.

§. 22. And what can be more reasonable for us to believe, than that God has the Superintendence and the Absolute Command of those Beings which are  
above.

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above us, that He directs and guides them according to His own high Wisdom and Pleasure, in limiting their Actions to certain degrees of Power over us; what is more just for us to think, than that He do's not suffer them to act in the Important Points of Religion with us, as they please; 'tis very manifest in the Christian Dispensation, that they are there represented to us as Ministering Spirits only, subservient to our Lord, that the best and greatest of them stood as admiring spectators of the wonderful Work of our Redemption, and were desirous to be informed of the *Mysteries* of it, and that the worst were obedient to his Commands, and humbly implor'd, from possessing of Men, His Permission to enter into a herd of Swine. However, therefore, Heathenism had exalted those Evil Spirits, which they worship'd by the pretended Miracles that were wrought by them, so as to make them approach very near the Deity it self; we find our Excellent Christianity gives us another Description of them, they are apparently under a Discipline not unbecoming the Great Ruler of the Universe, and under those Laws and Restraints, which his Justice, Veracity, and Goodness to Mankind, as we have shewn, wou'd necessarily prescribe from Him.



DISCOURSE IX.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. **H**AVING gone thro' Three of our Arguments, to evince the Divinity of the Christian Religion, as it is propos'd to us in the Holy Scriptures; there remains one more, namely, from that Wonderful Providence, which was observable in the surprizing Progress of the Gospel, without any Humane Means or Assistance, that was in the least equal to the Effect produc'd, the Conversion in a manner of the whole World.

§. 2. 'Tis sufficiently known, that Christianity was spread to the farthest parts of the World, even in the *Apostles Days*; that the first and principal Preachers of it were not Men of Politeness or Learning, and, in respect of Languages, only understood their own Native *Hebrew* or *Syriack*; that they were but a handful in number, and made use of no other Methods to convince their Adversaries than the giving a reason of the hope that was in them, with meekness and fear; they did not embrace any violent means to ascertain or establish their Religion, but depended on the good Providence of God,

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to justify their pious Endeavours of promoting what they were fully assur'd came from, and was Authoriz'd by Him. This was all the Humane Assistance given towards infusing new and unheard of Principles into the World, and if Effects are answerable to their Causes, (as all Mankind owns) that of Christianity's so universally prevailing, had been impossible, from the weak and incompetent Measures we have mention'd, which were taken to advance it.

§. 3. For can we imagine a few Men, without any Knowledge of Languages, excepting their own, shou'd understand all others besides their own, so as to be capable of preaching to all Nations of different Languages, the great Doctrines of their Religion? This in it self is a Contradiction; can we suppose a few Men, in these Circumstances likewise of Illiterature and Meanness, able to stem the Torrent of Greatness and Power, of the Learning and Philosophy of those Times, that lay hard against them? We do not find this (not even) in the present Age, when Christianity, tho' supported by the Secular Arm, is scarcely sufficient to defend it self against the trifling Pretences to Reason, and the Mighty, and I may say, Wise claims to Philosophy, made by

its Adversaries, much less can we think it was able to do it, when the Magistracy and Authority of the World oppos'd it, if it had not been asserted by a most apparently Divine Power.

§. 4. *Lastly*, Is it reasonable to believe, that Meekness and Patience shou'd be a means to propagate a Doctrine, which is the only Humane way to make it insulted? Did *Mahometism* so prevail, that can boast of more Proselytes than any other Religion, besides the *Christian*? None of these Causes are any ways proportion'd to the Effects we evidently perceive were in reallity produc'd.

§. 5. If not, what account can be given from this Humane way of procedure, to solve those other insuperable Difficulties, which wou'd ly against it? that is to say, the prejudice of Education, and more particularly the Strangeness of the Christian Doctrines, in Relation to its Mysteries, and the Disagreeableness of them, in respect of our Practice; the first seeming to thwart and contradict our Reason, and the last evidently opposing our Inclinations, cou'd these also be surmounted by this gentle and pacifick Method of Patience and Submission, which in a manner resign'd the first Christians to the Caprice

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and Pleasure of that very World they were  
to subdue.

§. 6. Let us now allow the utmost to  
what might be expected from *such* Means,  
what, I pray, wou'd at this present time  
ensue from the best use of them? They  
might perhaps work upon a few easy and  
harmless People, as we find in experience  
they now sometimes do; but have we any  
one Instance, except in Christianity, where  
they have converted Nations, and made  
the most powerful Monarchies and Em-  
pires truckle and submit to the Doctrines  
they affirm'd? Shou'd ten or twelve Per-  
sons go now about to tell the World of  
some strange and wonderful Appearance,  
that seem'd to be very difficult to apprehend,  
as that one certain Person was in  
their view, and in less than a moment  
transform'd into another certain Person,  
with all the Individual distinctions of Body  
and Mind belonging to him, (and yet Christianity  
gives us an account of stranger things than this)  
shou'd these Men solemnly declare this upon their word and knowledge,  
and endeavour to make others believe it by  
patience and meekness, practis'd towards their  
Opposers; how many do we think wou'd be  
prevail'd upon to side with and abet the Forgery?  
Not perhaps twenty Men of any common sense  
thro'

thro' the whole Kingdom, if we can suppose that even one Profelyte wou'd be made to such a Fiction; but if a hundred or a thousand cou'd be so weak as to fall under the Delusion, what wou'd this be towards the Conviction of an entire Nation? If this cou'd be done, wou'd not there be another Task as great behind; wou'd *France* or *Italy*, wou'd *Europe*, *Asia*, or the whole World immediately follow the Example of such a Credulity?

§. 7. But why do we speak at large? Is there not matter of Fact before our Eyes of a Pure and Holy Religion, I mean that of the Reformation from the Church of *Rome*, which for several Ages has been struggling against the gross Errors and Superstitions of a *Popish* Enthusiasm; and how much has it gain'd all this while? only a few Provinces of all the vast Extent of the *Roman* Empire: It is yet the *same* Christianity, which was Taught in the First Ages, has been endeavour'd to be promoted by the same Humane Methods, namely, Patience and Submission, and Just and Rational Arguments; it has had likewise the Glory and Advantage of thousands of Martyrs to die in its Defence; and the worst Enemies it has had to conquer, have neither been *Jews* nor *Heathens*, but only *Christians* of another Denomination.

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On the contrary, this *same* Religion, when its Humane Assistances were equal, and the Oppositions to it greater, upon its first Rise, spread and diffus'd it self to all parts, and, like a quick and sudden Light from Heaven, reach'd from one end of the Earth to the other; of which it is altogether impossible to give any account, if we do not allow Almighty God to have interpos'd his particular Power, and by Miracles and Inspirations to have given that surprizing Progress to Christianity, which, where the Humane Probabilities have not been less, it has not since experienc'd.

But, granting the Disciples of our Lord to be furnish'd with the *Gifts of Tongues, of Healing the Sick, and Raising the Dead*, all is explicable enough, and there is no wonder; there is nothing admirable in the Conversion of so many different Nations to the Faith of our Saviour, by the gentle ways of Humility and Mildness, and by a few Unlearned and Mean Persons; this was a Cause indeed able to produce so mighty an Effect, to which the other was wholly disproportion'd.

§. 8. I know (for I shall not dissemble any Objection, which I'm aware of, that can seem to ly against what we have said) I am sufficiently convinc'd, that the strange  
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Progress of *Mahometism* will here be thought of, as what must evidently weaken the Force of the foregoing Argument, which it is so far from doing, that it abundantly confirms it; for as that is confess'd by all to be propagated by Arms, and, as the Author of that Religion owns, he was sent to reform the World by the Sword, as he affirms, the Art and Discipline of War was what he pretended to, and nothing of Miracles. It is plain to a Demonstration, that if we find the greatest Violences us'd upon Mankind, had a Natural, and indeed a necessary Effect, to determine Men in their Persuasions, or at least in their Acknowledgments of a Religion propos'd to them, the greatest Humility and Meekness cou'd not, unless it had been enforc'd and supported by a Miraculous and more than Humane Power.

§. 9. Nor can it be here alledg'd, that the Success of the *Saracen* Arms was in it self greater, or carry'd any thing in it more Divine, than what is commonly known to attend such *Enthusiastick* Principles; Predestination and an Imaginary Paradise, have not made Victories peculiar only to *Mahomet* and his Followers; we have the same History from the *Goths* and *Odin's* Palace, and the wonderful pleasure of drinking in the Sculs of their En-

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mies; and yet what Divine Power will any one call in to justify the Effects of so palpable an Illusion? Alas! these things are only Natural, and bear the same face and appearance, as if ten or twelve thousand mad Men shou'd be let loose upon the World, with an unanimous Design to be (as they already possess themselves with the Imagination that they are) superior to Mankind; and in such Cases what great Effects may not be produc'd, even in a Natural way; when we see any one Person in the like Circumstances equal to the Force and Strength of several put together, this is not unaccountable in Fact or Reason. But these were not the Methods of Christianity, Submission and Patience, Kindness and Humility, a calm and even Temper, a generous and noble Behaviour to its Adversaries, a sedate and Manly, a Solid and Judicious Reasoning were all its Supports, excepting what was more and greater, the Providence of God, in maintaining it, and his miraculous Attestation to the Truth of it.

§.10. We have therefore now finish'd our Demonstration of the Truth and Divinity of the Christian Religion, and the Scriptures it propounds to our Assent; the chief of what we design'd to insist upon is consequently discharg'd, and there is  
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little more remaining, unless that we speak to those other two Particulars we mentioned in the Beginning of these Discourses; the first of which is, the Aptness of the Holy Writings, to furnish us with the best Directions for our Faith and Practice; for we are told, that as they are of Divine Inspiration, so likewise, that they are *profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness*: For *Doctrine*, that is, for informing us in the important and weighty Truths and Mysteries of Religion; for *Correction*, or *πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν*, that is, for giving us the best System of Morality, for *Reproof*, namely, for convincing us of our Errors, in relation to the *First*; for *Instruction*, or *πρὸς παιδείαν*; in reforming and repressing our Offences against the *Latter*. The Original is, ἡ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἑλεγχον, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν: suitable to which I wou'd take the liberty to make two Distinctions, in the Sense of these Words, which are generally resolv'd into four; so that πρὸς ἑλεγχον, shou'd depend upon διδασκαλία, and πρὸς παιδείαν upon ἐπανόρθωσιν, and the Import of 'em will be this, The Scriptures are *profitable for Doctrine*, to the reproving our Errors, πρὸς ἑλεγχον, and for a right and due Notion of things, which in the Original is ἐπανόρθωσιν, to the Chastise-



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ment and Discipline of our Manners, express'd there by *παιδεία*, from which Explanation will result these two Heads.

§. II. *First*, That Christianity, and the Scriptures which assert it, are the best and truest Measure of our Faith and Belief; and consequent upon that, the justest Standard to exact our Opinions to, so as to preserve us against our Errors, or reform us from them,

*Secondly*, That Christianity and the Scriptures, in which it is contain'd, afford us the Noblest and Divinest Rules for our Conduct and Practice; and consequent upon it, the severest Reproofs of our Deviations from, or Transgressions of them. For when we say, the Best and the Noblest, the *ὀφέλιμος*, or *profitable*, here mention'd, do's infer it; if we compare *πονηροὶ δὲ ἄνθρωποι περὶ πόροντες εἰς χεῖρον*, with *σύ δὲ μένει ἐν οἷς ἔμαθες*, and that with *θεόπνοος*, which is immediately join'd with it; the whole Connection of which is, that there were *evil men and deceivers, who only grew worse*: But do thou, says St. Paul (speaking to Timothy, to whom he address'd this Epistle) *do thou continue and persist in that which thou hast learned, in that inspir'd and profitable, or best Doctrine for ev'ry good Man to believe or practice; nor is it unfrequent with the Sacred Pen-*

Penmen to call that which is evil, only idle and unprofitable; of which several Instances might be produc'd, and therefore it is as reasonable for us to conclude, the *ὀφέλιμ*®, or *profitable* here, has a greater and higher sense belonging to it, than what is in our propriety of Language generally acknowledg'd to be signify'd by it; as it is plain it has from a bare Consideration of the Intention and Meaning of the Apostle.

§. 12. But to omit this, it is argu'd by some from this place, that the Scriptures here taken notice of, respect no other than those of the Old Testament, and by consequence Christianity is excluded from being any sharer in the Encomiums given of them; the Reason alledg'd is, because St. Paul in the 15<sup>th</sup> Verse says, that *Timothy from a Child had known the Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto Salvation, thro' the Faith which was in Christ Jesus*; but Timothy was not instructed from a Child in the Christian Writings, and therefore the Apostle refers to the Jewish.

§. 13. Nothing can be more inconclusive than such an Argument, since it supposes the *ταῖς ἱερὰς γραμματαῖς* to be the same with the *πᾶσα γραφή*, whereas it is more natural

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 tural to think, that the Apostle in *πᾶσα γραφή*, *All Scripture*, do's not only comprehend the *ἅγια γράμματα*, *The Holy Scriptures*, which Timothy had learn'd from his Youth; but the *οἷς ἐμαθήσεν ἐκ προτέρων*, *those things which he had learn'd, and with which he was entrusted*, to wit, not barely what he had personally told him, but the *Gospels*, which were already extant, and the *Epistles* he had writ, as well as *this* also, which were all committed to him, being a Bishop and Pastor of the Church, as a Sacred Depositum, and in which he therefore enjoyn'd him to continue stedfast; for *All Scripture*, *πᾶσα γραφή*, as well the *Holy Scriptures*, in which he had been educated from his Childhood, as those which he had since receiv'd, all was given by *Inspiration of God*.

S. 14. Besides, can we imagine that St. Paul shou'd say, that the Old Testament, exclusive of the *Gospels*, at least of the new, was given by *Inspiration*, that the Man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works; when in the eleventh Chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, at the latter end of it, it is said, *And these all having obtain'd a good report through Faith, receiv'd not the Promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us might not be made perfect.* For  
 how



how cou'd Men be perfect, and thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works, by the *Jewish* Dispensation; when they cou'd not by that be so without the *Gospel*, that better thing, which was provided for us Christians.

§. 15. Moreover, abstracting from this place of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, how cou'd either Perfection in general be ever deriv'd from Judaism only? since, if it cou'd, there had been no occasion for Christianity; or how cou'd a Christian Bishop in particular (the *Man of God*, which is here intended) be one, and sufficiently qualify'd for all parts of his Office, by being only acquainted with the Oeconomy and Religion of the *Jews*? unless a High Priest in one Case, was to all intents and purposes the same with the Bishop or Pastor in the other.

§. 16. To conclude, In the 15<sup>th</sup> Verse of this Chapter, the ἡγὰρ γράμματα, or the *Holy Scriptures*, which *Timothy* was educated in, are said to be able to make him wise unto Salvation, thro' Faith in Christ Jesus; but πᾶσα γράφῃ, or *All Scripture* in the 16 and 17 Verses, will make him perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works, and by consequence will make him wise unto Salvation also; therefore the

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*πᾶσα γραφή*, or *all Scripture*, must likewise include the Christian Doctrine or not; if it do's not, it cou'd not make him *perfect and thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works*, that is, *wise unto Salvation*; seeing *Faith in Christ* is requir'd to that, according to Verse the 15<sup>th</sup>; if it do's, either the Scriptures of the *Old Testament* are the Scriptures of the *New*, that is, *Judaism is Christianity*, which is impossible, since the *Jews* profess the one and deny the other; or else the Scriptures of both are joyn'd together in the *πᾶσα γραφή*, and are the same with the *τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα*, or the Jewish Writings annex to *αὐτὴν πῶς τῆς αὐτῆς Χειρὸς Ἰησοῦ*, which includes the Christian, and is that for which we contend.

§. 17. Let us therefore, after this long Interruption, and after clearing the Difficulties that seem to encounter the plain and evident Design of this place, upon which we are now discoursing, let us proceed to the first Proposition we mention'd, which was, that Christianity, and the Scriptures that assert it, are the best and truest Measures of our Faith and Belief: For, how is it possible it shou'd be otherwise, since we have already evinc'd them to be Divine? What comes from God must surely deserve our highest Esteem and Veneration, and will be infinitely to be preferr'd before any Human Systems, how  
rational

rational soever they may appear: Reason is but a dim Light in comparison with Revelation; and like the Eye in respect of the Body, so it, in respect of the Mind, only or principally serves us in the gross Occasions of Life, to judge what is necessary and convenient to be done, in order to its support, it cannot reach far into the Nature and Conditions of that which we are to lead hereafter; this Defect Revelation abundantly supplies, as it furnishes us with all those mighty Truths which concern the Blessedness of a future State, and teaches us the way to obtain it.

§. 18. Nor are the *Deists*, and the Men of Science and Affectation here alone justly blameable, who set up their admir'd Talent of Argument and Syllogism, in opposition to their Religion, which yet in a thousand Instances often proves to be, as the Apostle says in a like case, falsely so call'd; we have also from hence good reason to condemn the Church of *Rome*, who errs on another, tho' a better Extreme, as Superstition is better than Atheism; or to give them the most favourable Names, as Christianity, tho' with some additional Errors, is more to be valued than plain Heathenism: We have, I say, just grounds to condemn that Church, which makes its Traditions of an equal

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Authority at least with the Holy Scriptures, in ascertaining and determining the Rule of our Faith in its full Extent.

§. 19. I call the Church of *Rome* a Christian one, whose Errors are rather to be pity'd and commiserated than insulted; and we cannot but think, tho' its inveterate Persecutions of us, and the Cruelties it has been too sadly guilty of, in suppressing, if possible, the growing Reformation, might (if any thing else) give us not altogether unjust Suspicions of its being *Antichristian*; yet we cannot but be persuaded, that it is not altogether so bad as some Men wou'd make it, who under the *Odium* it has contracted by such unwarrantable Methods, as well as by its Errors, wou'd endeavour to banish all Religion out of the World, by affixing the Name of *Papery* and *Superstition* to it; we shall therefore against such Men be so bold as to affirm, that however the Reformation has suffer'd from the Church of *Rome*, it has that true Christianity as to forgive the Injuries that have been done it, and that it firmly believes, notwithstanding the ill usage it has met with from her, and the Errors she maintains, which rather than reproach her with, we most compassionately lament; that she professes the Faith of *Christ*, that she has been

a means of preserving it to us; that tho' her Foundations are charg'd with an unweildy bulk of Ceremonies and Superstitious Rites, which might be omitted, or of foul and palpable Mistakes, which might be easily redress'd, the Foundations themselves are yet safe and untouch'd; that at the worst, she is Christianity Unreform'd, which is much better than none; as Episcopacy, Presbytery, and the other present Denominations of Christianity, are no other than the Church of Rome, unless in Reformation.

§. 20. But some are so mad, and so exceedingly rage against her, spirited with a furious and passionate Zeal, for themselves and their own Atheism, that they seem to be very willing to prefer the Sacrifices of the Heathens, or the *Alcoran* of *Mahomet*, or even Irreligion it self (as one modestly says) before her; but far be it from us to subscribe to the Opinions of these Men: *O my Soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their Assembly let not us be united.* We freely own there is more Sense and more Religion in *Popery*, let its Errors be as many as they please, than not only in Atheism, but which is the same, than in any pretended or vain Systems of Reason, which these Triflers in Philosophy can propose: for if the Church  
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of *Rome* embraces the Scriptures, and all  
the Essentials of Christianity, and we  
have prov'd them to come from God,  
whatever has been superadded cannot  
diminish, only envelop and obscure this  
Divine Religion.

§. 21. And Pity it is but that Holy and  
Apostolical See, which once shone amongst  
the Churches of God with an Eminent  
Brightness and Purity, which was the  
great Bulwark of our Religion, against  
the continual Shocks and Attempts of  
Heathenism and Idolatry; which by the  
Piety and Illustriousness of its Examples,  
and the Sincerity and Truth of its Do-  
ctrines, gave, as we may justly imagine,  
a strong impression of the Valuableness  
and Esteem of our *Christianity*, upon the  
whole *Roman* Empire; Pity surely it is,  
that such a See is not restor'd to its Na-  
tive Beauty and Perfections, that it do's  
not wipe off the Stains and Blemishes it  
has gather'd, by an universal Reforma-  
tion; and in particular, by making once  
more the Holy Scriptures the Compleat  
and Absolute Rule of their Faith and  
Practice. This wou'd revive its Antient  
Glory, and make it a Terror to, as it is  
at present the Scorn of the common Ad-  
versaries of Religion.



§. 22. Lastly, are not our Brethren of the Reformation, who dissent from us, to be justly blam'd, who withdraw themselves from a Church, and from an Episcopacy, in general, which asserts the Sufficiency of the Scriptures, to direct us in what we ought to believe; which makes the Word of God, and those Divine Books, whose Authority we have endeavour'd to prove, the Measure and Standard of their Faith? It is not to be doubted but there are several Good and Excellent Men amongst them, whose Piety and Morals, as well as Learning, we have great reason to esteem and value; and if our Difference in Opinion disjoyns us, our Christianity ought to produce some kind of Union, at least, in our Affections; but they wou'd do well to consider, whether it is not a causeless Separation from us, which they encourage; we propose the Scriptures for the Rule of our Faith, they are read publicly in our Churches, and we are desirous to appeal to them in all our Doctrines, which are deliver'd from the Pulpit; what manner of Objection can be against such a sincere and open Profession of the Christian Religion?

§. 23. On the other hand, in the Assemblies of our Brethren, who separate from us, the Scriptures are not alike publicly and

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constantly inculcated, unless in Humane Compositions and Discourses upon them; which, whilst they are made exclusive of the Scriptures themselves, what is it but preferring our own Commentaries to the real Word of God; and if it is not locking them up in an Unknown Language, it is at least confining them to speak in our own, and not permitting them to explain themselves in their Proper and Genuine address to our Thoughts and Understandings; and if such a Practice shou'd universally obtain, what wou'd become of these Holy Oracles of our Religion, when Men wou'd seldom or never hear them in their purity, but shap'd and contriv'd into Doctrines, suitable to the Temper or Pleasure of the Expounder; a way that wou'd not fall much short of the *Romanists*, since this likewise wou'd oblige their Followers to judge of the Sense and Meaning of the Scriptures by a kind of Oral Tradition.

§. 24. Such a Usage as this, therefore, we cannot but highly condemn, under the same Head, with that of the Church of *Rome*; in which respect our Brethren the Dissenters do more essentially agree with that Church, than we do in any Instance that can be nam'd, however warmly the Charge of *Popery* has been pursu'd against

us; but God forbid that we should alledge this by way of Recriminating upon them; the extreme Charity of our Church induces it to forgive those Indignities, which have been offer'd it, instead of resenting them; and we rather bring it as a just accusation of the Practice of our Dissenting Brethren, in Vindication of these Sacred Writings, than with any Design of multiplying Charges against them, and likewise as an Argument to them to think more candidly of the Primitive and Apostolical Discipline, which we exercise in our Publick Worship of God, and with less partiality and prejudice of that which they have so zealously, but with less Reason espous'd.

§.25. The Second thing in relation to the Scriptures was, that they afford us the noblest and justest Rules for our Conduct and Practice, and this also is evident from their being Divine: Besides which, what were all the Systems of *Ethicks* before Christianity appear'd? They were little more than Collections of the several Topicks, under the general Heads of Honesty or Honour, which was divided into what was right, and what was commendable: the first of which contain'd the four Cardinal Verrues, of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and a Moderation of our Ap-



petites; and the last, all those things which by Custom and Prescription, or any other way, had gain'd the Repute and Applause of the Times: to make a Comparison betwixt which and the Christian Institution, we only need to take two different Examples, of which the Age on the one hand gives us too many Instances. Let us conceive an exactly temperate and sober Person, who is prudent, courageous and just, according to the Tenour of the foremention'd Vertues, who complies in other Respects with the humour and bent of the Times, takes up their Fashions, and in all Cases conforms himself to the Carresses of those about him; who will not suffer any Blemish to taint or sully his Reputation, but is ready to demand a full Satisfaction for any Injuries that shall be offer'd him in that kind, which is all comprehended under what they call Commendable. This seems to be a true Representation of what the World now-a-days terms a Person of Honour, as it was what the Heathens formerly meant by Morality.

§. 26. Let us now on the other hand consider a temperate and sober Person, and strict even to the practising the utmost Austerities and Mortifications, who denies himself the innocent Freedoms of  
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Life, that he may do good to others, and even relieves the Necessities of his indigent Brethren, by sparing something from his own Enjoyments; who is likewise prudent, not for his own Interest, but that of his Fellow Creatures; who is just, by being more than that, Charitable and Merciful; who is courageous and resolute, not in vindicating his own Honour, which he disregards, but that of Almighty God and Religion; not in revenging the Injuries that shall be done him, but in forgiving them, and supporting with Firmness and Constancy any Afflictions which shall befall him in the Discharge of his Duty; who do's not make the Opinions or the Applause of the Times the Measure of his Actions, but looks up to Heaven for his Direction; who, in short, spends his Life betwixt his Charity and his Devotions, the one prompting him to do all the Good which lies in his Power, and the other to prostrate himself before the Author of his Being, in the several Duties of his Religion, with the humblest and profoundest Adoration. This seems, tho' an imperfect, yet a Character ample enough for us to distinguish a *Good Christian*, from the foregoing Description of a Moralist or a Heathen.

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§. 27. Let any one now judge, when these *Two* are compar'd together, which of them deserves our greatest Love and Esteem; whether the Person of Heroism and Morality, who in a great measure makes himself the Idol of his Devotion, or the true humble and modest Christian; who has nothing more intimate to his Affections, than the Worship and Service of Almighty God, and the real Good of Mankind; if the last do's, what can we conclude, but that the Christian Ethicks are extremely superior to any Systems of Reason the Enemies of Religion can, or even to those wiser which the Heathens have propos'd.

§. 28. And we may justly call them Wiser, since they were form'd by Men, upon a cool Sense of things, and upon a deliberate and unprejudic'd use of their Reason, which tho' it cou'd not carry its Deductions beyond its own Limits, or farther than it self extended; yet those Systems appear to be unpassionate, and without any other Design, than to be as good Conclusions as cou'd be made from it. But the Adversaries of Religion give us new Schemes, as it is manifest, not out of any real love to Truth, tho' they often profess it, but purely out of Envy to the Authority of the Old, as might be evinc'd from



from several places, which it were easy to cite out of those kind of Authors; but where an inveterate Prejudice, where a confirm'd and settled Malice and Resentment lies at the bottom of Men's Writings, is there any just Reasoning to be expected from such Systems and Compositions? I'm afraid not, and we may therefore deservedly prefer the *Offices of Tully*, or the *Ethicks of Aristotle*, to any such New and Upstart Pretences, which in effect and reallity have more solid Judgment and Sense in them: and if Christianity and the Scriptures have prevail'd against those more Celebrated and Noble Writers, we believe, and hope, the Providence of God, and the Great and Sublime Doctrines of our Religion, will be able to justify them against the weak Efforts of a few impotent and designing Atheists.

§.29. To finish these Discourses, which we have had upon the present Subject; the last Particular mention'd in the Primary Division of our Argument, was the Design and Intention of these Writings, That *the Man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works*: 'tis true, what is here call'd the *Man of God*, by the scope and drift of the Apostle, seems more especially to respect *Timothy* himself, and in him the Rulers of the Church;

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but we shall take this Expression in a larger sense, to signify every Christian in particular, as well as the Bishops and the rest of the Clergy; since no one will say, that the Scriptures were only written for them; if they were, they have from hence a good Claim to keep them out of the hands of the Laity, contrary to the receiv'd Doctrine of the Reformation; if they were not written for the Governours of the Church only, then their Design and Intention, that the *Man of God might be furnish'd to all good works*, was not limited neither, but must necessarily be suppos'd to extend to every private Professor of Christianity.

§. 30. We have yet to do with a sort of Men in this Age, who think themselves excus'd from any Duties of their Religion, by putting the whole Practice of it upon those who preach and inculcate it to the World; and suitable to this, how often do we hear Men of the vilest and most profligate Lives, who seem to have no regard to any thing that is good and vertuous, intemperately calling for the Severe and Regular Conduct of the Ministry, as if the Scriptures, or the Injunctions they give, did not appertain to them? Whereas, if they believe these Divine Oracles, and that their everlasting  
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Salvation depends upon a due Observance of them; what will it avail them, that other Men, or that even the Assertors and Preachers of the Gospel are not so perfect as they wou'd desire? Will it satisfy their own Obligations to the Precepts the Scriptures bind upon us? Or are they the better themselves, because others are not so good as they might be? 'Tis a vain Affectation of Vertue and Religion, and will not prove of any Service in the end, at the Great Day of Accounts, (whatever Impressions it may make upon weak Minds here) for us to imagine we are really more conscientious and good in our Actions, by being able to calumniate and disparage any Order of Men whatsoever, much less the most Sacred our Religion owns; but how heavy will our ill Actions and Principles fall upon us, when to palliate them, (and with no other Design) we traduce much better?

§. 31. Again, If the Holy Scriptures were intended for the Reformation of ev'ry particular Person, those who are the more immediate Dispensers of 'em to others, shou'd take at least an equal, if not a greater care to exact their Lives according to the Doctrines they prescribe: The Pastors of God's Church (and the Bishops of it still in a more transcendent manner



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manner) are surely oblig'd to the highest Acts of Piety and Goodness, to propose nothing to themselves but the Glory of God, and the tenderest regard to their Fellow-Creatures; to develt themselves of every thing that is selfish, and only to consult the true Genius and noble Spirit of their most Holy and Divine Religion; this, if all of us wou'd endeavour to do, in our several Capacities, it is not to be doubted, but by the Blessing of God, it wou'd rise to its Ancient Grandeur and Esteem; and as it put on its Primitive Purity, so it wou'd likewise shine, with the same Glorious Lustre, to the confusion of its most inveterate Enemies and Opposers.

Which that it may do, God Almighty grant, for the sake of our ever Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be all Majesty and Dominion, Power and Obedience, now and ever.

A DISCOURSE,

*To prove that Matters of Faith are equally, if not more demonstrable, than those of Reason.*

HEB. II. Ver. I.

*Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not seen.*

§. 1. **O**NE wou'd be apt to admire, considering the several Humours and Fancies in the World, which pass for Sense and good Argument, that Men shou'd be so very ambitious to distinguish themselves from all other Orders of Creatures by their *Reason*, rather than their *Religion*; especially since we find so many Beings, much inferiour to us, endu'd with those Faculties, and performing those Actions which do powerfully persuade us they have a Principle within them, which makes very near approaches to the *one*; whereas they do not convince us, by any thing we can observe, that they are at all concern'd, or in the least acquainted with the *other*.

§. 2. And yet Men have carry'd this point so high, and have seem'd to value themselves so much upon this Distinction of their being Rational, that they have in a manner made it their Plea to juggle  
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*Religion* out of all its Pretensions, and will scarcely allow it any right or privilege of Jurisdiction in our Natures, they are so extravagantly pleas'd with their wonderful knack of marshalling of *Propositions*, and ordering of *Syllogisms*, that it is a hard matter now-a-days to make 'em relish any thing else; every one almost sets up for a Man of Reason and Science, whereas few take care of, or seem to be any ways concern'd for, their *Faith* and *Religion*, they are extremely cautious to avoid the Imputation of Ignorance and folly; but if they are too modest to be proud of their Vices, they are at least much at ease as to their being profane and wicked; too many think it no scandal, and there are not those wanting who esteem it matter of Glory.

§. 3. In short, *Reason* has usurp'd by its Artifice and Cunning, and its subtle and plausible Insinuations, an unwarrantable Power and Authority and (as Ambition never stops at the most tyrannical and the most unjustifiable Actions, where Empire is the Quarry in view) that it may Lord it with a more Unlimited and Arbitrary sway, *Religion* and *Morality* are depos'd and suspended from their governing Influence, are made to submit to the pleasure of this new Pretender, and, we have occasion to fear, an Act is pass'd with  
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some of its Votaries for the perpetual banishment of 'em out of the World.

§. 4. To bring therefore what succours we are able to *Religion* and *Morality*, in so sad an Exigence, and under so injurious a Treatment, to restore them to their due Prerogative and Esteem, and defend them from the outrage and violence of so bold an Invader, we shall draw a parallel betwixt *Faith*, and what is generally call'd *Reason*: We shall to that purpose consider the Nature and Meaning of both, we shall shew the vast preference there is of *one* to the *other*, even in respect of certainty, and prove that we have Demonstration for our *Religion* in the strictest Sense, namely, that *Faith is the substance*, or as the Original signifies, *the assurance of things hoped for, and the Evidence of things not seen*.

§. 5. But before we proceed any farther, it will be necessary to establish a true Notion of certainty, and what may properly be term'd Demonstration; this, as plain as it appears, has exercis'd two very Celebrated Pens in a tedious Dispute about it, and what we ought to understand by it; whether the Person who oppos'd that Reverend Prelate, has spent more Wit or more Judgment upon his Cause,

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Cause, whether he has been more lavish of his *Fancy* or his *Argument* is not very difficult to determine; for Personal Certainty which we distinguish from a real, (name it as we please) whatever difference some have thought fit to make betwixt it and Assurance, cannot be reasonably differenc'd from it, since it is nothing else but a Conviction or Persuasion of the Mind, that a thing is what we apprehend it to be; a Demonstration to us is likewise such a Persuasion; and if Assurance can be any thing less, it wholly proceeds from a Compliance in the Name, and not in the Subject, to be what we are resolv'd to call it.

§. 6. But if Men will not change, and mint words at pleasure, and are only ready to submit to the Laws and Properties of Speaking, they must own that all these signify the same Act of the Mind; nor can the ways by which Certainty is convey'd, tho' very different, make any alteration in the Impression, either we must be convinc'd or not convinc'd, certain or not certain; and it is in vain to think of trimming up a Middle Assent to the Mind, and then name it Assurance, which shall not infer our Certainty, and yet shall not be a proof that we are uncertain; this is to sham and abuse us out of our Religion;

gion, by a wise Method indeed, and to make us renounce the Certainty of our *Faith*, by endeavouring to make us believe a Contradiction; that we may not be certain of our *Religion*, and yet shall not be uncertain of it, or which is all one, that we may be certain and uncertain of any thing at the same time; these Men grant, that we may be assur'd of our Religion, so far as to exclude all Doubt concerning it, and yet will not allow us to be certain of it. Let the World judge, whether this is not a nice and curious Distinction, and to all appearance as much without a difference as perhaps the subtlest we shall meet with.

§. 7. We are told indeed, that a Certain Belief is impossible; it is by those Persons notwithstanding, who, it seems, can very well understand what the meaning is of a probable Assurance or Certainty; and why not a Certain Belief? Are we incapable of being sure or certain of what we give our compleat and unreserv'd Assent and Credit to? Did none of us ever meet with a Person in the World, the Truth of whose Affirmations we cou'd be as well satisfy'd of, as that we heard them; to whom we cou'd say, we absolutely and entirely believ'd him, that we had not the least doubt concerning what he alledg'd, and that we  
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cou'd stake our Lives, or any thing else, upon the Assurance and perfect Conviction we had of his Fidelity, that we were peremptory he did not deceive us, and we cou'd no more distrust him than the positive and undoubted Informations of our own Minds or our Senses?

§. 8. These Men are much to be pity'd, if it was never their good fortune to meet with such a one; when, God be thank'd, Mankind is not so far sunk in its Reputation for Integrity, but we can firmly and confidently believe one another in most things, which belong even to the ordinary management and conduct of our Lives. We can build Ships, and be at the Expence of their Freight, and hazard all we are worth upon the Seas, in the belief that there is such a Country as *Spain* or the *Indies*, but will any one say, this is not a Certain Belief? That we are not as much assur'd of it, as if we were actually upon the place; and that we run a venture after all our cost and preparation of ever finding *either*, tho' we shou'd make use of as prosperous a Voyage, as we cou'd desire or wish? Are we not as certain, and do's not the persuasion stick as fast, and ly as deep in our Minds, that there are such places as *Tork* or *Edenburgh*, as if we our selves had seen them; as if any one shou'd propose to us the most infallible Truth,

Truth, and the most indisputable Proposition in the *Mathematicks*? And yet this Certainty is founded upon our Belief, and our full acquiescence in the Veracity of others. But to render this still clearer, and to put it beyond all Contradiction, we shall consider the Nature of *Faith*, and afterwards that of *Reason*, and prove that there is more certainty to be expected from the *one* than the *other*.

§. 9. *Faith* then is, as the Apostle calls it, the *Evidence of things not seen*; it is not a Belief in that sense which some Men apprehend, but in that which we have already explain'd; however, seeing they have thought it worth their pains, instead of pursuing true Knowledge, which they pretend to prefer, the Critick and Chicaning upon words, which they wou'd seem to disregard, we shall not call *Faith* a Belief, but a *Perfect Assent* of the *Mind* to things *which are not seen*, a full Assurance and Conviction which we have receiv'd, and an undoubted certainty which we have of those things, which we were never Eye-witnesses of, which we cannot prove by Lines and Angles, and only depend upon the Credit and Report of others, for our Information. That Men do give such an *Assent*, that they actually lye under such Convictions, we do and

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must take for granted; since we will appeal to any one, Whether he is not as really assur'd, and as certain, that there are other Men in the World besides those, we will suppose, whom he now sees, who live and breath, and act as if they were present to his Senses? Whether he is not as much satisfy'd and as infallibly convinc'd, that there is such a place as *Italy* or *Rome*, as *France* or *Paris*, as if he had liv'd and receiv'd his Education there? This therefore is the *Evidence of things not seen*, and this is the Apostle's Definition of *Faith*, which we shall endeavour to maintain.

§. 10. As for *Reason*, in opposition to *Faith*, it is the *Evidence* of things which are seen; it is the same Assent as to the Mind with the other, but to that which lies within every one's View, which his Thoughts or his Senses contemplate and behold, and in which he thinks he cannot possibly be deceiv'd; if our Thoughts are employ'd in the search, and we rest in the Notices they bring us, it goes by the Name of Knowledge, if our Senses, of Perception; so that in respect of the Impressions made upon our Minds, either by *Faith* or by *Reason*, it is manifest they are the same, and only disagree in the Methods and Ways of producing



cing our *Assent*, which we shall now examine.

§. 11. The *First*, they will tell us, is founded upon Probabilities; and the *Second* proceeds upon plain Arguments and Demonstration; the Question is not, therefore, Whether we are convinc'd by either; but whether we have reason to be so; personal Certainty is the Result of both; but a Man may be certain of a thing for which he has no good grounds; he may find his Assent wholly determin'd from very false and precarious, or from weak and incompetent Motives; he may be confident he sees and knows what perhaps he really do's not: and therefore, it will, in the *Third* place, be necessary to enquire, Whether the real Certainty of *Faith*, or that of *Reason* is preferable, upon the account of the Premises from which it is drawn; that is, whether the Mind may more reasonably assent to those matters which are well attested, or to those which are recommended to us from our own Knowledge or Perception; and from thence we shall learn, Whether *Faith* or *Reason* depends most upon Probabilities, and which of them puts in the better Title to Evidence and Demonstration; and I am apt to think upon a view of the whole, it will be granted, that it belongs to the for-

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mer, to the *Religion* we have embrac'd, and the *Faith* and *Certain Belief* which we profess in it.

§. 12. All the Objection that I know of, which lies against our being *certain* from the Testimony of others, is, because there is a possibility of our being deceiv'd, either by the Mistake or the Disingenuity of those who challenge our Assent, or by their want of Power and Capacity, or of Will to inform us; which is the same as to say, because Men may be designing, or because they are fallible, therefore we cannot in any case be sure that what they affirm is true; if this then is sufficient to destroy our Certainty from *Faith*, it will equally hold against that of our *Senses*, and our *Reason*; for do they not impose upon us in a multitude of Instances? do they not deceive our Caution, and baffle our strongest Guards and our strictest Watches, and continually sooth and flatter us into Error, and ensnare us into some false and undue conclusions or other, in spite of all our Care, and all our Diligence and Pains to avoid 'em?

§. 13. As to our Senses in particular, their Impostures are great and notorious; they are continually practicing upon our Easiness, and take a pleasure, as it were,  
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in playing upon and abusing us: if any Man were to form his Judgment according to what he sees, who wou'd think the Sun several Millions of Miles above us, or that it was bigger than many of our Earths put together; were our Sight alone to be advis'd with, it wou'd tell us the quite contrary; and had there not been Methods found out to convince us what ill Reasoners our Senses prove, we might, upon their views, have been perhaps as positive of their being in the Right, as we now know they are in the Wrong: and thus it is in our Reasonings, or at least in those of the Persons who pretend most to 'em, in opposition to our *Religion*, they judge according to what they presume they see and apprehend, they are clear and determin'd in their decisions, and will not allow it is possible for them to be mistaken; whereas they do not consider that all this Certainty, which they so much cry up and applaud, is only the Consequence of their own Principles, which tho' they may believe they see and discern never so distinctly, may after all appear to be the Effects of too narrow a Sight, and too cramped and contracted a Comprehension.

§. 14. This is plain in Fact, that the greatest Wits and the most industrious Inquirers into things, have been misled



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into an Assurance, which has afterwards only given them the Shame of repenting it: how many Books have been writ, how many Disputes maintain'd, how many Contests rais'd and carry'd on, and with what Heat and Vehemence, as well as at other times, with what Calmness and Sobriety; and on both hands, with what a Mien of Confidence and Satisfaction that they are each in the right, tho' they are as different in their Opinions, and as widely distant in their Positions and Assertions, as they can well be?

§. 15. That this is so, is more particularly evident in the *Controversies*, the several *Doctrines* and *Hypotheses* of Men, who resign themselves wholly to the weak and glimmering Light of *Reason*; who make high claims to the Knowledge and Science of Nature, and believe themselves the only understanding Men in being, and that the rest of Mankind are little better than Fools or Ideots; and yet I wou'd be glad to be inform'd of any Arguments almost, which they have assur'd to us, that do not depend upon Surmises or bare Suspicions, or disputable grounds, or plain Falshoods; where is there now one Sage Possessor of *Theorems* and *Axioms* amongst them, who is not positive of a void space in the Universe? And notwithstanding this

this firm and invincible persuasion which they have, there is nothing more demonstrable than that all their Arguments for it, are only so many Affirmations of what was intended to be prov'd; and these yet are the Men, who by the same trifling and ludicrous way, and with much jangle and insignificant proofs, endeavour to pervert and ruin our *Faith*; and after all this huge pains and labour which they take, they will find at the bottom, that their best Evidence against *Religion*, is their saying there is none.

§. 16. But let us leave these Arguers of an *Hypothetick* and supposing Head, and carry our searches even to that part of Knowledge, which has all along had the Character of Demonstrative, and we shall perceive, that there likewise something else reigns than pure Conviction; 'tis true it is a retir'd Study, and skreen'd by its obscurity and Reservedness from common Eyes, and so is not so liable to the Observation and Animadversions of others, nor sometimes of its own Professors; this indeed is sufficient to palliate its Fallacies and Vices, to hide its Failings and Imperfections, and to keep them from being expos'd to publick contempt and scorn: but it is no more excus'd from Defects, for their not being

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vulgarly known, than a Man is without Faults or Blemishes, who has the Art and Skill to dissemble them. What are the Famous Disputes concerning the Angle of Contact, the Diameters of certain Curve Figures, the Doctrine of Fluxions, and the Arithmetick of Infinites, with several other points in that Science, the harshness of whose sound will make me forbear to mention them? What are the several fruitless Attempts upon some Questions and Problems, which have been hitherto unresolv'd and unanswer'd; in all which cases, the different parties have appeal'd to their Arguments for their Justification? What are they, I say, but undeniable Examples of the Fallibleness even of that which is pretended to be no less than *Mathematick* and uncontrollable Evidence? Not to say (which we shall prove upon another occasion) that the greatest part of that Knowledge rests as much upon Authority, as perhaps it do's on *Reason*; and that it is rather suited to our use, than to the Truth and Reality of things, and rather to our present, than possibly to our future, and our more finish'd and more exact Conceptions.

§. 17. In conclusion, what we generally call Certainty and Demonstration, is in other terms nothing but Fancy and Opinion,



nion, and to be convinc'd that a thing is such, is not always a proof that it is such; we may be certain of being in the right, even when we are in an Error, and doubtful, tho' we have Truth on our side; and there is nothing more than Temper and Complexion requir'd, to make us sure on the one hand, and unsatisfy'd on the other; where there is a peculiar Boldness and Forwardness infus'd into our Natures, or a mixture of Credulity, and an Aptness to believe, or an extreme Devotion, and an unreasonable Deference to the Sentiments and Authority of other Men, or to our own Parts and understandings, we are likely enough to be carry'd into a Confidence, that we have nothing less than Demonstration to support us; when, perhaps, in the end it may be a fond Conceit of our own cherishing: on the contrary, a Man that is naturally timorous and modest, whose Inclination and Genius leads him to Distrust his best and his closest Reasonings, may fear the worst, and be apprehensive of a Mistake, even where his Arguments are conclusive, and his Notions sound and agreeable to the unalterable and essential Qualities of things.

§. 18. From whence it follows that Personal Certainty is not always, and perhaps

haps very seldom, the Measure of Truth, but of our own Apprehensions; and when some call for it so strenuously, in Matters of Religion, it is not because it is really wanting, but because it is not fitted to their Taste and Relish, to whom that seems forcible and valid, which falls in with their Interest and Humour, not which agrees with their true and unprejudic'd *Reason*; whose Faculties lye more in knowing what pleases and what obliges them, than in any accurate and solid thinking, and whose Demonstrations or their Notices, are only the Effects of mere Whimsy and Imagination.

§. 19. But if Certainty is many times an Assent of the Mind upon false Appearances, it will be probably ask'd, Whether we can ever know what is true and what is not, in matters of Argument and Persuasion; since our strongest Convictions sometimes serve only to put the cheat upon and amuse us: to which we answer, That it is one of the most difficult things in the World to do it, but that it is not impossible; that we may steer as prudently and as cautiously as we are able betwixt the *Atheist* or the *Deist*, which are in truth the same, who takes ev'ry thing for good Sense, which agrees with his own Conceits, and the *Sceptical* Person

son, who will not allow any thing to be so; it is therefore, we affirm, the most difficult thing in the World to arrive at the knowledge of what is real Truth in our Conclusions from Reason.

§. 20. For, *First*, it is evident we must be well assur'd of the Grounds and Principles upon which we proceed; that is, of the several single Conceptions which we make use of in any Demonstration, that they are just, and in all respects answerable and proportion'd to the things we intend to consider; and in consequence of this Rule, we must be careful that they are not Impressions either deriv'd from Authority, or produc'd by any Chymical Fancies, or palm'd upon us by long Custom and Familiarity; they must exactly, and to the utmost Nicety, and the smallest Distinction, correspond with the subject of 'em; which cannot many times be known that they do, unless where our Conceptions are abstracted from any thing foreign to 'em, and consequently, are the Standard and Measure of themselves; that is, where the Mind argues not upon things as they are, but as they are conceiv'd; and which is founded upon this one plain Proposition, that what we see and apprehend, we do see and apprehend; To that all the Arguments made  
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use of by Atheistical Men against Religion, are by this one Consideration only cut off, till they can prove their Notions absolutely commensurate to the real Essences of Beings, which they have not hitherto done; and this is the Glory of the *Mathematicians*, and a Fairness and Impartiality of Thought to be met with solely amongst those Men of Demonstration.

§. 21. But then, over and above, it is *Secondly* requir'd, that we always keep our first Notions steady, that we do not change nor alter them by any Carelessness or Inadvertency in the progress of our Reasonings; that we maintain their Respects and Relations firm and immutable, and guard against all their several Interferings; and this is so hard a Province, that few Men, even of the best *Geometricians*, have been in all Cases sufficient for it; they have frequently lost themselves in the Perplexedness and Obscurity, or in the Length and Prolixity of their Demonstrations; and it is very often that they make use of a Proposition as prov'd in general, which they have evinc'd only upon certain Suppositions, and so many times apply it in other Demonstrations, where the Suppositions are either very different, or directly contrary: And this is a Fault which runs thro' the greatest part of

of that Science, where it concerns the most intricate Questions, which have been accounted impossible to be resolv'd, and which are render'd the more embarass'd by such a Procedure.

§. 22. And thus we see how difficult it is in some Cases, and how impossible almost in others, to attain at any true and infallible Inferences from Reason; we must be sure that we are wholly unprejudic'd, either from our Complexions and Natures, or our Educations; we must be satisfy'd that we have not too overweening an Opinion of any Man's Authority, or our own Parts and Sagacity; we must only carry our Eye level at Truth, and suffer nothing to interrupt or divert that Prospect; we must consider withall that Truth is only the Measure of it self, and not our Certainty; and, therefore, where we design our Notions shou'd ly parallel with it, we must confine them only to what are usually call'd *Identical* Propositions, and to the several Relations and Proportions of them; in the comparing of which, we must be well appriz'd of our Abilities, and the Firmness of our Thoughts, that they do not relent or recoil, that they do not vary or change shape in the whole process of our Arguings; and whether our Adversaries in their Disputes

putes against Religion have in any measure observ'd these Laws, I leave all Mankind to judge, when we cannot so much as find them duly attended to, even in Mathematick Demonstrations.

§. 23. Let us now therefore examine, whether we are not furnish'd with as good or a clearer Evidence for what we believe upon the Report and Credit of such, whom we have not any reason to suspect they wou'd deceive us; and first, we can be as sure that those Actions which we see done, we see done, or that *that* Person or Place, or Thing which we see, we do see, as we can be of our own Thoughts, that what we think or apprehend, we do think or apprehend; the Ground therefore of our *Faith* is as positive and certain as that of *Mathematicks* themselves; so that if we can prove an Action, when it is well attested, is as demonstrative, as that which we have been witnesses of; it will be consequent from thence that we have a greater Evidence for Religion, than for the plainest Proposition in *Geometry*; since we can be surer of the Grounds and Principles of a Science, than of any Deductions or labour'd Inferences from them (which, as we have already shewn, are many times false, and never true, but under a world of Cautions) and much more there-



therefore of our *Religion*, than of the most forcible Arguments against it.

§. 24. There are then two Cases, in which we may be as certain from the Testimony of others as from our own Sight and Perception; namely, either when it is deriv'd to us from those who are capable of informing us, and can harbour no Designs of abusing us; when the Reporters are Men who make a Conscience of their Affirmations, and are altogether unpractis'd in the base Arts of imposing on others; who know not what it is to be guilty of a Falshood, and wou'd not dissemble the Truth from us upon any Considerations; or else where the Informers are not always the most credible, yet the number of 'em is so great, and it comes so universally witness'd on all hands, that it were madness to disbelieve it.

In the first Case, it is no more than for us to assent to this Proposition, that he, who will not deceive us, will not deceive us; and in the second, where a Multitude of Attesters of different Inclinations and Opinions, and of different Aims and Interests, agree in the Affirming any certain thing, that thing must as necessarily exist, according to their Apprehensions, as several Lines of a different Inclination falling into the same Point must suppose a Centre;  
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but those Apprehensions in Matters of Fact must be agreeable to the Matters of Fact which are apprehended; upon the former Principle, which we mention'd, That what we see, we do see; so that Faith, or Belief, in these Cases, is as certain as the very Grounds of Mathematicks, and therefore more certain than those Demonstrations, which are deriv'd from them, which are sometimes erroneous, and do frequently lead us into sophistical and wrong Conclusions.

§. 25. And as the Principles of that Science, besides their Self-evidence, receive an additional Proof from the Rules which they furnish us with for our Practice, as Measuring and Accounting; so likewise do these hold in the Events and Conversation of the World; we find it plain in Experience, that we may believe, on either of these Conditions, with as much Certainty, as we can perceive or see. Where we are fully inform'd of any one's Probity, of his Integrity and *Religion*, we can as securely trust him as our selves, and in truth meet with no more Disappointments from such a Faith, than from the Convictions of our Senses. Again, when there is the concurrent Report of good Men, or of a multitude, even of ill Men, do we not find things answerable

to our Belief, whenever we are willing to make the trial? Did ever any one miss of seeing *France* or the *Hague*, if what he had been so often told of, he was desirous to be convinc'd of by his own Eyes? So that our Reasonings, upon Belief, are as much confirm'd by what we experience in Fact, as our Arguments in *Mathematicks* are by what is consequent in their Use and Practice.

§. 26. And under these Circumstances is the Belief of our *Religion*; for the Authors of it, upon whose Credit we depend, cou'd not be sway'd by any Interest, unless Reproaches and Persecutions, Disgrace and contumelious Usage, Afflictions and Difficulties, and Hardships, Poverty and Labour, Hunger and Thirst, Cold and Nakedness, and encountering with innumerable Hazards and Dangers, and at length the most grievous Tortures, even unto Death itself, are really things desirable, and worth our Pursuit and Ambition; and if Men will not venture to say, these might be so many Incitements to the Apostles of our LORD, to be the Promoters of an Imposture, I will venture to say, they were so many Arguments why they shou'd not enter into such a Conceit of imposing upon the whole World; they were Men undoubtedly, and cou'd not, no more than  
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others,



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others; be in love with their Miseries; and make it their business to effect and contrive their own Misfortunes.

§. 27. Besides this, they were Men in all respects of the most exact Honesty, and their Doctrine and Conversations turn'd wholly upon Piety and Vertue; they laid down their Lives in Confirmation of the Truth, which they had deliver'd, and if, after all this, such Men can be suppos'd to deceive us, without the greatest Absurdity and Contradiction imaginable, I must take the freedom to suppose there is no such place as *Spain* or the *Indies*, in the averring which truth, no one ever dy'd, no one ever gave the like Proofs with the first Christians of their Candour and Credibility; for we have not only the Testimony of the Apostles, but of all that Age and some following, to the Truth of our Christianity, which still retain'd the Spirit, deriv'd to 'em from their Forefathers, of suffering any Calamities, or any Torments, or any Death, rather than deny the Lord that bought them.

§. 28. And lastly, if this is not sufficient, we have likewise the concurrent Attestations of Persons, whose Inclinations, and whose Aims and Interests, were not only different, but contrary. The *Jews*, than whom no People were more superstitiously fond of the Rites and Ceremonies

remories of their Ancestors, no People more zealous for their Worship, and more obstinately addicted to their Law, and the Religious Institutions, which they receiv'd from their Progenitors, and the great Founder of their Polity and Government, tho' they perceiv'd *Christianity* wou'd rise upon the Ruin and Destruction of that, for which they had entertain'd the profoundest Veneration, which they accounted the dearest and most valuable Blessing they possess'd; tho' they were aware how opposite it might be to their temporal Advantage, if it shou'd provoke the *Romans to take away their Place and Nation*: yet, notwithstanding all this, many of the Priests, and a great number of the Laity, believ'd in this Religion, profess'd their Faith in our Saviour and his Doctrine, and seal'd and confirm'd it with their Blood; and those who did not follow the same Methods with their Countrymen, cou'd not deny the Miracles that were done by the Christians of those Ages; *St. Paul*, who was a Persecutor of the Church, even to Rage and Madness, at length became a Convert to the Faith he had once destroy'd; and *Josephus*, one of their own Historians, a *Leuite*, and who flourish'd not many Years after our Lord's Crucifixion, if that Passage is genuine, which there is no more reason

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to dispute than any other in the same Author, gives a very full and significant Encomium of our Saviour, and the wonderful works he perform'd; from which the said Historian could not but think he was something more than Humane, as he himself professes.

§. 29. The *Heathens*, both *Greek* and *Barbarian*, *Elamites*, *Armenians*, *Mesopotamians*, all fell in with the same Belief of the Blessed Jesus and his Miracles, and therefore it was that *Christianity* almost prevented the *Apostles* Preaching it; for it was in a manner impossible, that they by their own Affirmations should bring so many over to the Faith in so short a time, had there not been a general Rumour spread before of our Lord's Actions; which it is evident there was, if we may credit *Eusebius*, who tells us of a Letter written by *Abgarus* King of *Edessa* to our Saviour, with an Invitation to him to come and shelter Himself there, from the Malice and Persecution of the *Jews*. And amongst the *Romans* particularly, both the Magistrates and Philosophers, the greatest and most inveterate Enemies the Christians had, acknowledg'd the Wonders perform'd by Him; the First by proposing He should be enroll'd amongst their Gods, which the Senate refus'd only, because the Motion was not first made by them; the Second, by setting



ring up *Apollonius Tyannus* in opposition to Him.

§. 30. The *Valentinians* made Him one of their *Sons*, or else deriv'd Him in a direct Line from them; and therefore, according to their Doctrine, confess'd Him to be of Divine Original. The *Elionites* and *Cerinthians* never deny'd the Miracles He wrought; and *Simon Magus*, that great Impostor, who pretended to be God, would at the same time take upon him to personate our Saviour.

§. 31. All the false Gospels and spurious Writings, which then swarm'd in the World, were so far from diminishing this Character, that they rather endeavour'd to raise it; and, as it is very common, when any Person has establish'd to himself a Reputation for Great and Glorious Achievements, whether a *Hercules* or a *Theseus*, to attribute those Actions to him which he never did; so it was not to be expected but that here likewise Forgeries would be vented to the World, which yet do not destroy or make void the Truth and Reality of those Actions and Miracles, which were confess'd and known; but builds and depends upon them, but confirms and supposes them.

§. 32. Here therefore is the Confession of all sorts of Men, driving at different Ends, and pursuing contrary Interests;

and now, whereas any one of these Conditions, which we have nam'd, were enough to make a thing credible; even to Demonstration, we have every one of them; we have the Probity of the Assertions, the Unprofitableness and Disadvantage of affirming such a Falshood, and not only the general Concurrence of Persons, whose Designs were too different and disagreeing to be owing to any joint or unanimous Concert, but whose Prejudices and violent Dispositions, and private Reserves, wou'd have put another Bias upon their Acknowledgments, had age Truth and Matter of Fact carry'd them to own what was so universally known and believ'd.

§ 33. To conclude all, I will only put this Case; Suppose our Saviour had been born in this Nation, and in the present Age we live in, had Taught that Doctrine which we preach, had wrought those Miracles in confirmation of it, which we affirm, had given those Proofs of his Divine Mission, which we contend; what had been the Consequences of all, but what we are inform'd were, that some wou'd have written a true account of his Life, and others wou'd have forg'd one; some wou'd have believ'd, others not; some wou'd have follow'd their Convictions, and others their Interests and their Prejudice; as to which, even in the greatest  
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Students of their Religion, see find Men  
young-days neither free, nor less obedi-  
ent than those Ancient Times; howeve  
forward we are to condemn them; sine  
notwithstanding we have all these Evi-  
dences for the Truth of our Holy Faith;  
which are as great as ever the Jews had;  
there are not those wanting amongst us,  
who if it lay in their power, it is to be  
feard, wou'd again crucify their Lord, and  
put him to open shame.

§. 34. And now, after this Demonstra-  
tion of our Religion, allow me to make  
these Two short Reflexions.

First, Upon the Wisdom and Goodness  
of God, who has provided for us a bet-  
ter Evidence by our Faith of all the Do-  
ctrines, which are reveal'd to us for our As-  
surance in Practice, than we cou'd possibly  
have had from our Reason, as we have  
endeavour'd to evince.

And Secondly, Upon the folly and in-  
sincerity of those Men, who plead so  
insistently for Demonstration, which at  
last is no more than to be positively add-  
ed to some set of Notions or other, which  
they have form'd to themselves, and to re-  
quire that nothing shou'd be stamp'd with  
the Image or Resemblance of Reason, but  
what shall be found agreeable to them, as  
if their own Opinions were the Rule of  
right thinking, and Knowledge and good  
Sense



Sense were confin'd to themselves, as if their Heads were to be a pattern for every man else, and no one might depart from this cast in which their own were moulded.

Well then! should Almighty God have propos'd our *Religion* to these Men, upon rational grounds, and demonstrat'd every part of it by just and competent Arguments, what Effects may we conceive wou'd have follow'd from it? Wou'd they have been better perswaded of their *Religion*, or wou'd it not rather have furnish'd matter of endless Cavil and Dispute? And the plainest and most evident Principles wou'd, in all probability, according as Men were inclin'd to favour or discourage them, have met with their entertainments, and been suitably caress'd or oppos'd.

We, therefore, who are educated in so Holy a *Religion*, let us thank Almighty God, for the abundant Evidence we have of it; let not the Desertion of others from their *Faith*, be any inducement to us to relinquish it: God Almighty will judge them for their Apostacy, and as we need not be sham'd of our Assurance concerning things which we hope for, and do not yet see, so He will also reward us for our Perseverance.

*FIN*

## E R R A T A

**P**ref. §. 2. Read, Sufficiency of the Scripture Revelation.  
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they pretend, to prefer the Critique, and Chicaning.

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